



CHAMBER MAKES PARKING APPEAL

Report by Jonny Drury

OSWESTRY Chamber of Commerce is to contact Shropshire Council to ask for "common sense to prevail" over businesses being hit with parking fines.

The chamber's move comes after Oswestry businessman Tom Brown claimed parking fines are damaging efforts to keep the town's retail centre alive.

The butcher and health food entrepreneur said he was left angered after his drivers were given a second parking ticket in recent months. The latest £70 fine came when his Meat Man van parked outside his Heat Health Food Bar to pick up recycling. Mr Brown said: "The van was in the loading area sticking out slightly, but the time on the ticket shows we had not even been a minute unloading and loading things. Local people are setting up local business, giving jobs to local people and just trying to make the town a better place overall."

Shropshire Council bosses said the fine was issued because the vehicle was not in a dedicated loading bay and said penalty charges can be challenged via the authority's website. Last year Jason Edwards, of AC Edwards fruit and veg, was given a parking fine, prompting an outcry from local businesses.

After the latest incident, chairman of the chamber of commerce Mark Derham said the group would contact Shropshire Council to see if any middle ground could be found.

He said: "It is disappointing to hear about the latest incident. I know there has been a problem and a few people have been hit in recent months. I think this is a big problem. We have done a lot to promote businesses recently, and we don't want this to knock business back. "I think there is a need for just common sense to prevail."

Mr Derham said all motorists, whether car, van or lorry drivers, have to abide by the parking regulations. However, he wants to try and find some sort of solution. He said: "There has been no confrontations with the wardens, they are just enforcing the rules. And there can't be one rule for one and one for another. But delivery drivers are not shopping, they are dropping off deliveries. It would do no harm for us to contact Shropshire Council to see if we can possibly find some sort of solution."

● Clobbering – See Page 5

Hundreds expected to take part in Derwen Walk



Derwen College students, from left, Susie Allcoat, James Evans and Georgia Carr, are ready for the fundraiser. Photo: David Hamilton.

HUNDREDS of walkers will be stepping out this weekend to help the specialist Derwen College raise funds for a hydrotherapy pool.

The annual Derwen Walk has been in existence for more than half a century and has raised hundreds of thousands of pounds for the Gobowen-based college for young people with disabilities and learning difficulties.

This year's event will be held on Sunday. There are two routes, one of six kilometres,

the other 10 kilometres, both taking in local lanes and footpaths.

Organisers say between 300 to 400 people are expected to take part, leaving the college from 11am onwards.

Proceeds this year will go towards a new therapy and fitness centre which will benefit students at the college and will be made available to help others with disabilities in the local community.

The plans include a hydrotherapy pool. The college is appealing to the community to raise £60,000 to support the project with the money going towards the cost of internal fittings and fixtures in the hydrotherapy pool. These include hoists, safety items, special lighting and sensory features and other essential equipment needed to make the centre purpose-built for the students.

● Limbers – See Page 8

BUSINESS

First Innovation Park units will be available next year

THE first phase of a multi-million pound business park on the outskirts of Oswestry will be ready for firms to move onto next year, council bosses have announced. Shropshire Council says it is keen to attract development partners and potential occupiers to the Oswestry Innovation Park.

A £9.3 million government grant which will improve the road system on the Oswestry bypass has helped bring forward work on the infrastructure on the Mile End site. Up to 57 acres of land is being developed with the first phase ready in 2019. An investment of £13.2 million will be made in the infrastructure on the land, currently farmland, with the site expected to take up to 15 years to be completed.

A national marketing campaign has been launched to promote the site.

Shropshire Council Deputy Leader Steve Charmley said the employment park would tie in with plans for hundreds of more houses for Oswestry. He said: "The Oswestry Gateway Sustainable Urban Extension will unlock land for 900 new homes, drive long-term sustainability in Oswestry and create the conditions for employment growth – creating and securing 1,400 jobs in the area."

● Showcasing – See Page 27

TOURISM

Light railway gets ready for visitors

THE Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway opens its eight-mile track for its 55th season as a heritage line this weekend – with plenty of Easter fun on the way.

Railway volunteers have worked through the worst of the freezing winter weather to get the line ready for the spring opening.

The first train of the season leaves Llanfair Caereinion at 10am on Saturday. Easter bunny services will run from March 31 to April 2 with free eggs for children.

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Officers say road ahead clear for 600-home scheme

Report by Sue Austin

HIGHWAY officers at Shropshire Council say there are no transport issues standing in the way of a 600-home development for Oswestry.

J Ross Developments has applied for planning permission for the houses on a large piece of agricultural land between the town centre and the Oswestry bypass.

Residents living in eastern Oswestry have written to Shropshire Council saying they are worried that their residential roads will be used at "rat runs" and that the local transport structure will be unable to cope with the extra traffic the development will generate.

In a letter to the council, highways officer Mark Wootton says that there had been worries about the strategic highway network but this had now been resolved.

The government has given a £9 million grant to Oswestry for improvements to two roundabouts on the bypass, the construction of a third roundabout on Shrewsbury Road and the creation of a pedestrian bridge between the housing and a planned innovation park on the other side of the bypass. Mr Wootton said the plans included a link road between Shrewsbury Road and Middleton Road which met the aspirations for developing the area of land. "There are no substantive highways issues that should prevent this application being approved as it is," he said.

He said that the roundabout at the junction with Shrewsbury Road, the Maes y Clawdd industrial estate and the new development should be constructed before house building starts.

His comments come on the back of a host of objection letters from residents in and around the area, who fear the increase in traffic will create safety problems.

Susan Steward lives just off Middleton Road which, she says, will become one of the main routes into the town centre from the new houses. She is also worried that Aston Way will be used along with Cabin Lane to travel north.

Lights, camera, action for work experience



Rocking Horse Studios director Gareth Thomas with work experience student Ryan Jones and actress Christine Kelly

IT'S lights, camera, action for students on work experience with a difference.

Oswestry's Rocking Horse Studios has teamed up with North Shropshire College to offer media students the chance to get involved in the world of film and video.

This month the video and film company, run by Gareth Thomas, welcomed three work experience students for a fortnight.

Ryan Jones, Jack Davies and Maddie Foster have been working on a promotional

video for the Highwayman pub in the town.

Mr Thomas said: "They have been involved in all aspects of filming, from script-writing to camera work and then editing."

"They have been given a lot of independence and responsibility."

Tutor at North Shropshire College Charlotte Williams said it was wonderful for the students to be able to be involved with a professional film company.

"They gain a huge amount of experience," she said.

Last year's work experience students have retained links with the Rocking Horse Studios and been involved in the feature length film it is creating.

Run for your Life is an anti-bullying film that looks at the life of an athletics student and her struggle to overcome bullying.

The project has won the praise of the national Anti-bullying Alliance.

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Cold snap brings a boost to bookings

THE "Beast from the East" has helped see sales in sunshine holidays rise by 44 per cent at an Oswestry travel agents, bosses have revealed.

Hays Travel Oswestry, in Cross Street, which is part of Hays Travel North West, is reporting the upsurge in sales compared to the same time last year.

Bosses believe the recent cold snaps have helped hot up sales by encouraging holiday makers to book a warm sunshine holiday to look forward to and created more time for snowed-in customers to look on social media for the best deals.

Lindsay Barber, retail sales director for Hays Travel North West, said: "The early part of the year is always a bumper sales period for us but our sales figures have been through the roof so far this year."

"We have had a phenomenal increase with Oswestry recording a 44 per cent increase for March when compared with the same time last year."

"Many customers were coming in and telling us that they were fed up of the cold and wanted to get a holiday booked so they knew they were guaranteed some warmer weather at some point. It was the same for our foreign exchanges. People were coming in and picking up their currency and saying how they could not wait to get away."

● Blast – See Page 28

Hidden Figures to be screened

THE next film to be shown at Marton Village Hall will be Hidden Figures.

It will be screened tomorrow (Friday). Starting at 7pm, admission costs £4 and the film is based on a true story of the female African American mathematicians who served as the brains behind one of the greatest operations in US history, the space race. For more information call (01938) 580116.

Hitler stickers found at home, court is told

Report by Jonny Drury

KNIVES, guns and Adolf Hitler stickers were discovered in a home near Oswestry that was being renovated by a soldier charged with terrorism offences, a jury has heard.

Lance Corporal Mikko Vehvilainen is on trial for being part of the banned neo-Nazi group National Action.

In his home at the Sennybridge Camp in Powys a host of weapons were found, the trial was told.

And when officers searched a home he was renovating in Llansilin, near Oswestry, they found knives, a shotgun, an air rifle, Nazi badges and Adolf Hitler stickers.

The trial at Birmingham Crown Court has also heard how an illustrated picture of white nationalist Anders Breivik gunning down a group of people, including members of ethnic minorities, and a host of Nazi memorabilia, was found in his Sennybridge home. Army trainer Vehvilainen, 33, and fellow Royal Anglian Regiment soldier Private Mark Barrett, 25, of Dhekalia station, Cyprus, but formerly of Kendrew Barracks, Cottesmore, Rutland, are both charged with being members of banned group National Action. A 23-year-old man, who cannot be named for legal reasons, also stands accused of the same charge.

Jurors heard that counter terrorism officers from North Wales and Dyfed-Powys searched a house Vehvilainen was renovating in Llansilin on September 5, 2017.

Karen Robinson, prosecuting, said police found a box of gel-fuel blocks, two lock knives, National Action flyers, Nazi badges and flags, an SS ceremonial dagger, "Swastika bunting" and Adolf Hitler stickers.

In another room, in a locked cabinet, he also had a licensed pump action shotgun and 13 shells, and an air rifle, the court heard. Vehvilainen is also accused of two counts of stirring up racial hatred and possessing a document containing terrorist information, known as the Anders Breivik manifesto.

He denies the allegations and the trial continues.

Building firm unveils £200k investment



Managing director Steven Owen, construction director Jamie Evans and commercial director Victoria Lawson and staff outside the newly expanded Pave Aways offices

A BUILDING contractor has handed over its latest completed project – a £200,000 office extension to support its own growing business.

Pave Aways has created seven new office spaces and a break out room for staff to relax in at its headquarters near Oswestry.

The firm is also planning to recruit for three new key roles – a health and safety manager, contracts manager and structural/civil engineer – in the coming months in

an additional £250,000 investment to help it reach its target £35m turnover by 2025.

The extension has added an extra 960 sq ft to the footprint of the administrative base for the full building contractor. The break out room features an area for staff to relax in alongside activities such as table football so they can unwind during their breaks.

The new extension was the first major addition to the site in recent

years and was completed by an in-house team while work continued on the range of multi million contracts currently on Pave Aways' books.

Managing director Steve Owen said: "As befits our reputation, we finished the job on time and on budget."

"The extra space will give us the capacity to grow as we deliver on our long-term strategy for sustainable growth."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Light railway is looking for help

ORGANISERS of a light railway in Mid Wales are calling on volunteers to step forward.

With the season starting in the last week of March, volunteers thinking of helping the Welsh and Llanfair Light Railway are being urged to go along and see what they can do.

The railway runs between Llanfair Caereinion and Welshpool's Raven Square. There are a wide range of volunteer opportunities including shop keepers, working in the tea rooms, as a station guard, a duty manager or in the workshop. Those interested should contact Robert Robinson on townclerk@mail.com

King Oswald to be in spotlight

OSWESTRY Civic Society will hold the last talk of its 2017-18 season this evening (Thursday) with a look at King Oswald.

Historian John Pryce-Jones has entitled his talk 'King Oswald, Oswald's Well and the beginnings of the Parish Church'. It will take place at St Oswald's Parish Centre, from 7pm for 7.30pm. Entrance is £4 for visitors, free to members. Light refreshments are served prior to the talk.

Thief assaulted workers at store

A THIEF who stole laptops from a supermarket and then returned two days later and assaulted staff will be sentenced by a judge.

William Mark Windsor, 31, of Mount Street, Welshpool, went into the town's Tesco store on December 22 and stole two laptops valued at £468. He then returned the next day and attempted to steal two more laptops of the same price. Again, he returned to the store on Christmas Eve and assaulted Josh Middleton, Linda Ruscoe and Mike Hughes.

He also verbally abused all three while in possession of a bladed article. On Tuesday last week he admitted the charges before Welshpool Magistrates Court. He will be sentenced at Mold Crown Court on April 5.

Please join us for our Holy Week & Easter Services at St. Oswald's Parish Church, Oswestry

Sunday 25th March - Palm Sunday

10.30am Blessing of Palms, Procession and Parish Eucharist

6.30pm. Stainer's 'Crucifixion'

This is a 'Come and Sing' event. Anyone who would like to sing is welcome.

Rehearsal. 3.00pm; Tea 5.30pm; performance 6.30pm.

Thursday 29th March - Maundy Thursday

7.30pm. Solemn Eucharist of the Last Supper

Sung by the Choral Scholars & Adult Choir

Following the service there will be watching at the Altar of Repose until

11.40pm Close of the Watch - Compline sung to Plainsong by the Adult Choir

Friday 30th March - Good Friday

10.00am. Family Service

Sung by the Junior Choir & Choral Scholars

12.00noon. Three Hours Devotions

Saturday 31st March - Holy Saturday

7.30pm. Easter Vigil | Sung by the Choral

Scholars & Adult Choir

Sunday 1st April - Easter Day

10.30am. Festival Eucharist | 6.30pm.

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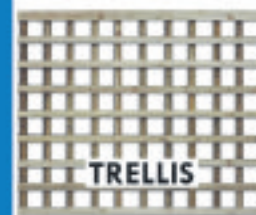
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Reverend Carole Marsden

New minister settles in to community

A NEW minister in Shropshire could not have had a better start to her life in the county, helping to host a youth music festival.

Reverend Carole Marsden is the minister at Christ Church United Reformed Church/Presbyterian Church of Wales in Chapel Street,

Oswestry. The church was one of the venues for competitions in the festival. Reverend Marsden is herself a musician and in her spare time likes playing woodwind and brass.

Her role will be shared between Oswestry and Shrewsbury, as

minister of the URC church in the county town.

She said her journey to Shropshire began last Easter when she felt that her then role in Cumbria was drawing to a close.

"I looked at a number of places and was drawn to the setting of

Shrewsbury and Oswestry. The area has a town/rural feel with lots going on but great green spaces and the occasional hill too," she said.

"The people seemed warm and inviting with challenges and joys facing the churches," the church minister said.

Residents have chance to have say on key plans paper

Report by Jonny Drury

PEOPLE have two months to comment on changes to a local development plan before it is rubber stamped.

The Powys County Council plan has been put together by planning inspector Nicola Gully and now the latest version is available to view.

It can be viewed online, at council offices, and in public libraries, and has been subject to amended changes following previous representations.

In the latest plan, Ms Gully has stated that over 5,500 new homes need to be built in Powys before 2026, to meet the housing supply.

Mayor golf day to aid charities

OSWESTRY Town Mayor's charity golf day will be held at Mile End Golf Club on April 6.

Entry fee is £120 per team and that includes a meal, sweet and coffee after play.

Teams of four are invited to take part and the format will be a Team Texas Scramble, with a 10 per cent handicap allowance.

The men's handicap limit is 24 and the women's handicap limit is 32.

Tee times are noon and 2.30pm and will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

To book a team people should call the golf club on (01691) 671246 or Oswestry Town Council on (01691) 680222.

All funds raised will go to charities. The charities to benefit will be Designs in Mind, U&I Counselling, Trail Blazers Dementia and Connect for Life.

Other topics in the lengthy report, are space for seven more pitches at traveller sites around the county. These would see five built in Machynlleth and two at Leighton Arches in Welshpool.

Solar and wind energy has been a controversial part of the local development plan.

Plans released in May 2017, showed that Powys could house a 280-acre solar farm on land between Newtown and Rhayader.

The new plans were submitted in that draft of the LDP, and were part of the local authority's strategy to build 20 solar farms in the county to replace the need for wind farms.

These would include sites across Montgomeryshire, including Llandrinio, Welshpool, Lake Vyrnwy, Llangurig and Trefeglwys. The plan also states that it is cutting the county's energy target for wind farms by 90 per cent, from 600 megawatts to 60. Under the new plan the inspector has said 11 of the 33 local search areas for solar development would have an adverse effect on the landscape.

However around 20 of the sites would have no impact at all.

Former MP dies, aged 75



Warren Hawksley is seen, second left, presenting a plaque marking Ironbridge being named a World Heritage Site on May 5, 1987

WARREN Hawksley, the Oswestry-born Wrekin MP who entered Parliament in the 1979 general election, has died at the age of 75 following a short illness.

Mr Hawksley was renowned as an unashamed right wing Tory who supported capital punishment and wanted to see the birch brought back for young offenders. His electoral grip on the marginal Wrekin seat was never secure and after holding it in 1983 with a majority of 1,331 he was ousted by Labour's Bruce Grocott in the 1987 general election.

Later he went on to become MP for Hale-sowen and Stourbridge from 1992 to 1997.

After defeat in 1987 imposed an enforced break on his Parliamentary career he and his then second wife Evelyn built up the Ed-derton Hall Hotel and restaurant at Forden, near Welshpool. On its sale in 1997 he looked for a new career in charity fundraising. Born in Oswestry on March 10, 1943, he was educated at Mill Mead, Shrewsbury, and Denstone College, Uttoxeter.

He was deputy chairman of Oswestry Conservatives from 1975 to 1977.

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Traffic wardens 'clobbering town centre businesses'

Report by Sue Austin

TRAFFIC wardens are making life even more difficult for businesses trying to keep Oswestry's retail centre alive, it has been claimed.

Butcher and health food entrepreneur Tom Brown has been angered by the second parking ticket his drivers have been issued with in recent months.

The latest £70 fine came on Tuesday last week when his Meat Man van parked outside the Heat Health Food Bar in the town centre to pick up its recycling. Mr Brown said the driver had only just gone into the premises when the ticket was issued.

Merger is agreed by top firms

TWO of the best known firms in Shropshire and Mid Wales have merged.

Morris, Marshall and Poole, and Norman Lloyd, have merged in a deal that will see a single business created.

The move will incorporate Welshpool Livestock Sales, one of the largest in the UK. The merged businesses will be named Morris Marshall and Poole with Norman Lloyd, bringing together the expertise of both businesses specialising in residential, commercial and agricultural property and land services throughout Powys, Shropshire, Ceredigion and south Gwynedd.

Tony Evans, partner at MMP, said: "The merger is a key part of our ongoing investment in growing the business and providing our customers with the best possible service."

Norman Lloyd offices at Newtown, Welshpool and Llanidloes will transfer to the existing MMP offices in these three towns.

Its Bishop's Castle office will become part of the MMP network, with offices at Llanidloes, Newtown, Welshpool, Aberystwyth, Oswestry, Machynlleth, Rhayader and Tywyn and a presence in Aberdify.

The company will employ 60 staff throughout the area.

Tributes paid to comedian Jim



Jim Bowen married wife Phyllis at St Oswald's Church in Oswestry in 1959

TRIBUTES have been paid to comedian and presenter Jim Bowen who has died at the age of 80.

Mr Bowen, known for his long role presenting the popular quiz show Bullseye, died after several weeks in hospital.

The comic died with his wife Phyllis by his side and had strong links to the Oswestry area after marrying his wife in the town 59 years ago.

Phyllis worked in a shop in Bailey Street in the town and the pair, who met at a college dance, married at St Oswald's Parish Church in 1959.

A former Oswestry man, Dave Owen, who now lives in Scotland, said his auntie

and uncle knew Phyllis during her time in Oswestry.

He said: "Phyllis worked in a shop in Bailey Street when my Auntie worked at Dobson's."

"They were married in 1959 at St Oswald's Parish Church in Oswestry."

"My understanding was that he did his National Service as a PT instructor at Park Hall."

His links to North Shropshire didn't stop with his wedding, as he was posted to Nesscliffe camp when he was part of the Royal Army Ordnance Corps. He completed his basic training and was posted to the central ammunition dump which was in Nesscliffe.

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BREEZE ABOUT TOWN

One or two things got me a bit hot under the collar this week with a little touch of the red mist threatening to engulf my normally calm disposition.

Like trying to cancel a Sunday hospital appointment because I was snowed in only to discover the appointments phone line isn't manned on the Sabbath and having to make another four calls before getting through to the right hospital never mind the right department. Then we get criticised for not turning up for our appointments. Or seeing schools closing all across the Shropshire/Powys border on Monday morning because staff couldn't get through the snow. About 99 per cent of routes to local schools were snow-free by 8am so why couldn't staff get in? Everyone else had to get to work. The safety of pupils is a different matter. Then there was seeing the same people, who took to social media to complain that their local council had not cleared the snow from their housing estate on Sunday, moaning that their recycling hadn't been collected on Monday. Do they live in some parallel universe? And reading the results of a survey that Powys now has the worst road surfaces in Wales didn't help my mood too much either. Put things into perspective. Powys has the largest and most rural roads network in Wales which equals the biggest repair and maintenance bill. It also has the worst funding model from Welsh Government which equates to a network of massive potholes. Simple.

Thank goodness there was the bright spot of the weekend in watching my beloved Wolves beat Burton Albion 3-1 to restore their six point lead at the top of the Championship even if it was the coldest day for watching football in my lifetime.

.... While we're on the subject of sport, footballers don't get much good press away from the playing field but it's hats off to staff and players from Welsh Premier League side TNS this week for helping to save a man's life.

Players and officials were quickly on the scene when the man suffered a cardiac arrest at the ground, administering CPR and using a defibrillator which helped keep the gentleman alive. Those who helped have been officially thanked by the man's wife and deserve a lot of praise. If ever there was an example of the need for defibrillators at sporting venues this was it. Every venue, no matter how big or small, should have a defibrillator close by and trained club members.



Queen's Brian May is a prominent campaigner



Should badgers be culled to prevent the spread of TB?



Farmer Richard Yates is in favour of culling badgers

Battle lines drawn over extension of badger cull

JAMES PUGH reports on controversial plans to extend the badger cull into Shropshire

THE culling of badgers in a bid to stop the spread of bovine TB has divided opinion since it started.

While the argument for culling badgers is that in the long term it will control the spread of TB in cattle, campaigners against the scheme believe it is ineffective and other measures can be carried out.

Ministers – and many farmers – say measures to control cattle-to-cattle transmission cannot stop the spread of the disease on their own.

Controlling TB in the badger population needs to be done at the same time, they say.

Extend

The Government is looking to extend the cull – and Shropshire could be included in the next stage of the culling programme.

A consultation on the cull extension plan came to a close on Monday this week.

Among those who would welcome an extension of the badger cull is cattle farmer Richard Yates, from Middleton Scriven near Bridgnorth.

He said bovine TB had a devastating effect on farmers.

Mr Yates, who has 300 cattle at his farm, said he had been subjected to an embargo on buying and selling cows and bulls other than for slaughter since three suspected cases of TB were found at his



Anger over badger culling is never far away – protesters in Shrewsbury in 2014

farm just before Christmas. He said: "After being clear for four years we failed an inspection, and that means we are subjected to testing every 60 days and we have to be clear for two successive inspections before we can trade again."

"Somebody who isn't connected with the industry can't imagine the trauma and distress caused by TB."

Yet the effectiveness of culling badgers on reducing TB looks set to go on being disputed.

Cited

Defra has cited a recent academic paper showing there was less cattle TB in cull zones in Somerset and Gloucestershire after two years of culling compared to equivalent areas of coun-

tryside. Meanwhile, attempts have been made to demonstrate that badger vaccination is a more effective and humane way of controlling the spread of TB between wildlife and livestock.

Tris Pearce is licensed to vaccinate badgers and is involved in a badger vaccination programme in Shropshire.

He said: "We almost eradicated the disease in the 1950s by the close control of cattle movements, double fencing our farms and taking simple bio-security measures."

"I am amazed when I visit farms that there are very few where I am even asked to clean my boots."

John Hughes, development manager at Shropshire Wildlife Trust, said: "While we have every sympathy with farmers losing cattle to TB, there is no evidence that killing badgers is a solution."

"Indeed there is strong evidence it can make things worse. The trust and other local nature conservation groups have been actively vaccinating badgers."

"Perhaps it would be more productive to also start vaccinating cattle and for farmers to improve their biosecurity if we want to see an end to this terrible disease."

A statement on behalf of the Shropshire Badger Group added: "We are appalled that the Government/NFU seem determined to blunder on with their discredited and nonsensical badger cull and turn Shropshire into the next wildlife bloodbath."

Proved

"It has never been proved that badgers can even transmit TB to cattle in the first place."

"The cull was first introduced in south-west England against the advice of all leading independent scientific experts, and after five years it has cost taxpayers around £50 million with no proof of any disease control benefit."

"Until last year no culled badgers had even been tested to check whether they even had TB, and 85 per cent of the 944 badgers finally tested in 2017 were clear of the disease, with fewer than four per cent of them actually infectious."

"Badgers, farmers and taxpayers alike deserve better than our Government/NFU's stubborn pursuit of this shockingly incompetent disease mismanagement policy."

The last round of culling licences set a target of reducing the badger population in the affected areas by 70 per cent.

Last year, more than 19,000 animals were killed in eight counties, including Cheshire, Herefordshire and Gloucestershire.

WORKING FOR YOU



So many try to talk down the UK economy, that I'm using my column to redress the balance. Personally, I believe the UK is in a far better place than is often portrayed.

The UK economy has grown every year since 2010. It now has a manufacturing sector enjoying its longest unbroken run of growth for 50 years, adding three million jobs since 2010 and seen every single region of the UK with higher employment and lower unemployment than in 2010. It has seen the wages of the lowest-paid rise by almost seven per cent above inflation since April 2015. It has seen income inequality lower than at any time under the last Labour Government.

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The UK is witnessing the first sustained fall in debt in 17 years. A turning point in the recovery from the financial crisis of a decade ago has been reached.

Glyn Davies
Montgomeryshire MP

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Just leave now and then negotiate later

HAD the Government immediately implemented the decision of the British people, as expressed in the referendum on June 23, 2016, we wouldn't be where we are today – mired in uncertainty and totally frustrated by the procrastinations of those who so arrogantly refuse to respect the clearly expressed will of the people.

Had the Government served the Article 50 notice in 2016 we would now be looking forward to leaving the EU later this year.

Instead, they chose to delay and then to compound that perversity by treating the referendum result as a mandate to 'negotiate' rather than to simply 'leave'. There is no logical justification for maintaining the forlorn hope of a satisfactory outcome when it is clear beyond a peradventure that the other party to the negotiations is bound by inflexible rules, not least the free movement of people to which so many object.

Added to that must be the recognition

that the EU negotiators simply dare not strike a deal with Britain that is more advantageous to us than the terms applicable to the other 27 member states for fear of precipitating an unravelling of the entire EU project. Britain must leave, lock stock and barrel and then, as a truly independent nation, open negotiations for an EU Free Trade Agreement.

CHRISTOPHER GILL
Bridgnorth

Voting system is still flawed 100 years after the watershed

FEBRUARY 6 marked 100 years since women were first given the right to vote. In commemoration many hundreds of people, including MPs themselves, were hunger striking in an action called Hunger for Democracy to demand equal voting rights for all.

In 2017 a whopping 68 per cent of votes cast were not counted towards the final result because of the perverse arithmetic of UK general elections, run under a 'first past the post' voting system even a 10-year-old wouldn't defend. I am among the disenfranchised. This forces vast numbers of us to vote tactically against candidates we oppose rather than for those we support. In 2015, one party received only one seat while netting 3.8 million votes. Another received 56 seats for only 1.4 million. The 'winner' of the election got 11.3 million votes, only 36.8 per cent, but was handed a neat majority in parliament by our corrupt electoral system. Such a rigged system makes a mockery of democracy and contributes to the pervasive sense of political disconnection in our country. In centuries past, my father's city of Newport, south Wales, was the scene of the famous chartist uprising, when people were gunned down for the right to have their voice counted.

Subsequently, women also fought, suffered and died for the same right as part of the suffragette movement. The job is not finished. Proportional voting systems in which seats match votes fairly are good enough for the Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliament, so why are we denied the same at Westminster?

OWEN BROWN
Bishop's Castle

Taxes should pay for police

I HAVE just received the 2018/2019 council tax bill which amounts to a yearly increase of £88.

Taxation in its civilised essence is for the benefit of the whole community.

In that respect I can accept a five per cent increase.

What however I do find unacceptable is that my council tax is partly funding the wages of a so-called police and crime commissioner and his retinue of office staff.

Rather, I want my taxes to go to help paying for a police force which includes a public presence on the streets – a presence which helps to deter and apprehend crime. That is where public taxation for policing should be going.

Perhaps if Mr Campion got out of his office and did some actual police "beat" work he would really be doing something to promote law and order.

MH DAVIS
Oswestry

A knock-out photo of boxing club from 1954



Come on, this will knock you out. It's members of Trefonen boxing club sparring in 1954, and is another image from the Geoff Charles Collection held at the National Library of Wales. We don't know where they were sparring, but looking at the background it might have been a barn or something like that – are there any old boxers around who can tell us for certain?

God definitely wants us to enjoy some pleasure

I SOMETIMES feel a bit envious when I see birds soaring and diving in the air, seemingly for the fun of it, their bodies are perfectly aerodynamic.

Sir David Attenborough watched dolphins surfing, having a whale of a time in the waves and concluded they were doing it for sheer pleasure. Why do birds sing first in the morning before seeking their breakfast?

Seems all creatures enjoy themselves one way or another, not sure about the busy bees always hard at work collecting honey for us to steal and enjoy.

I think all creatures great and small were created for God's pleasure. It says in the beginning that He was pleased with what he made, He's the God of pleasure, look it up in the Bible.

He definitely wants us to have pleasure, too, just think of how we all came to be here. Every tree and flower displays his beauty because he knows they delight our senses.

RON JONES
St Martins

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST

Readers' Letters,
The Chronicle,
14 Salop Road,
Oswestry, SY11 2NU

EMAIL

ian.stjohn@
shropshirestar.co.uk

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

We should think of old people as well

DO any of the 'experts' ever think of the older population of this country?

A human contact is much better than any automation or DIY, particularly regarding supermarket shopping.

Some older folk – I am 83, strange though it may seem – to them they may be the only chat they have with someone in a week.

Perhaps they should remember there is also a large number of OAPs who also think of the older, and younger, assistants who will be out of work.

EDWINA LAWLEY
Muxton

Political policies always need to be taken carefully

THE disturbance and shootings in Calais amongst migrants, many of them wanting to come to the UK, should be a reminder that David Cameron's Government did stand firm over carefully vetting those wanting to live in the UK, when at the time many people were in favour of basing a rational immigration policy just on distressing photos of migrants.

Cameron on the whole stood his ground and although he increased the annual intake of migrants, the main course was to allow family units to settle in the UK from refugee camps paid for by the UK.

Sometimes taking the time to think through a course of action and its after-effects, instead of joining a popular clamour, is a sign of leadership. It is interesting to see how quickly Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma has turned from a political figure that many in the UK feted, to someone overseeing the persecution of some of her own people.

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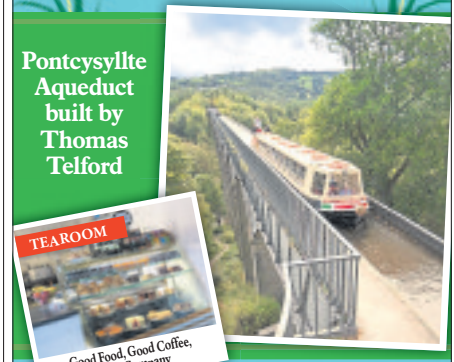
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NEWS IN BRIEF

Details of show are announced

ORGANISERS of Penrhos and District Sports and Mini Show have organised details of this year's event.

The event will take place on July 7, it has been announced.

Organisers are urging people to keep the date free and come along to the enjoy the fun in the summer.

A spokesman said: "Now in our 83rd year we would very much like to welcome you to our traditional sports and show with all the usual children's races including inter schools football, netball, tug of war and show competitions.

"Schedules will follow later."

The spokesman added: "A very big thank you to all who helped us raise another £1,000 for the Severn Hospice at home service at last year's charity luncheon.

Claude Bourbon to play at gallery

LIVE at Oswestry's Willow Gallery on Saturday night will be singer-songwriter and dazzling guitarist Claude Bourbon.

French-born Claude performs solo and gets his inspiration from a wide range of musical traditions including classical, jazz and blues along with Spanish and Latin elements and strains of Western folk.

Internationally recognised and now based in the UK, this versatile, passionate musician gives his all to every performance – and has a number of critically-acclaimed albums to his credit. Tickets cost £10 and £5 for children and can be obtained by calling at the gallery, by phoning (01691) 657575 through the gallery's website at willowgalleryoswestry.org or at the door on the night.

Start time is 8pm with doors open at 7pm.

Councillors refuse plea for new cinema funding

Report by Jonny Drury

TOWN councillors have rejected a request for funding to help open a new cinema in Oswestry.

Trevor Harris, who ran Oswestry's Regal Cinema, was hopeful of re-opening a cinema in the town.

He made a request to Oswestry Town Council for a grant to help open a 112-seater cinema in a former church building in King Street.

However, his plans were dealt a blow after councillors decided at a recent meeting they would object to offering any funding to Mr Harris.

Back in December Mr Harris was granted planning permission for the cinema, with hopes it could mean new jobs for the town.

Anthony Harris of AJH Cinema Ltd, Mr Harris's son, applied to operate the new business from the building, which has been empty for five years.

The proposal was to show new films on release, with two evening screenings at 6pm and 8pm, Monday to Sunday. An additional screening will be held at 2pm on Saturdays.

The plans said the premises would also have a small stage which will allow other live and recorded performances and events to take place.

Permission was granted at the time by Shropshire Council using delegated powers. Oswestry currently has a cinema, Kinokulture, in Arthur Street.

There had been hopes that a cinema would be included in a £45 million shopping and leisure complex on former livestock market land on the Shrewsbury Road. But these were dashed when Cineworld announced it was pulling out of the deal.

Olive limbers up for 50th Derwen walk



Olive Morris is ready to take on the Derwen Walk – for the 50th time

OLIVE Morris is dusting off her trainers to take part in her 50th sponsored walk to raise funds for a specialist college.

The 74-year-old from Oswestry will join between 300-400 walkers on Sunday for the annual 10k Derwen College sponsored walk, having already clocked up more than 400 miles to support the charity over five decades.

She has raised thousands of pounds during that time towards facilities for students with learning disabilities and difficulties.

Although she missed the very first college sponsored walk in 1967 she took part in the 1968 walk at the age of 24. Half a century later she shows no signs of slowing down.

She has already raised £400 this year.

"I have had to pick up extra sponsor forms from the college, I'm on my fourth form now," she said.

"I've got some very supportive friends from church, gardening club and dancing."

Miss Morris says she keeps fit through gardening, and is not at all worried about completing the 10 kilometre route.

"The walk is actually easier than it used to be," she said.

Stab victim makes call for tougher sentences

A MAN who was left with the broken tip of a knife in his back after being stabbed has said he doesn't believe his attacker was given a harsh enough sentence.

Kristen Breckell needed surgery on the lower part of his back to remove the piece of the kitchen knife after the clash at an Oswestry house in December last year.

The victim was stabbed by 28-year-old businessman Nicholas Woodhead during a drinking session at his home in Millers Field, Morda after an argument.

Woodhead was jailed for 16 months, having admitted a charge of wounding.

He said he had been acting in self-defence, but the court was told his actions went beyond the use of reasonable force.

After the sentence was given Mr Breckell said that sentences like that did little to deter knife crime.

He said: "I don't believe the 16-month sentence is long enough for such a serious attack and stabbing given the injuries I sustained and given the defendant had a previous conviction for knife crime."

"I believe sentences need to be higher to help stop the increase in knife crime."

Shrewsbury Crown Court heard Woodhead had previous convictions for assault and a wounding offence in 2008 involving a previous girlfriend.

The court heard that Mr Breckell had cuts to his right hand and to both forearms and to the side of his neck and a black eye.

The stab wound to the lower left area of his back was inflicted as he was moving away and the tip of the blade had broken.

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Rail bosses in warning about train disruption

NO trains will be running between Shrewsbury and London Euston on Easter Sunday while essential works take place.

Reduced services will also be in operation on March 31 and April 2.

Virgin Trains and London North-western Railway services will not operate to allow essential rail upgrades to take place at Wembley.

Train customers planning trips to and from Euston on the West Coast main line are urged to plan their travel on days other than the Sunday.

As part of Britain's Railway Upgrade Plan, Network Rail engineers are doing preparatory work to enable the wholesale replacement of north Wembley junction in August. The junction is old, worn out and needs replacing.

While the railway is closed to trains for Network Rail's work, HS2 Ltd will make use of the opportunity to carry on with preparatory work for Britain's new high speed railway.

Euston station's Easter Sunday shutdown will affect rail services throughout the West Coast main line including at Coventry, Birmingham, Manchester, Preston, Carlisle and Scotland.

Services on Saturday and Monday will also be busier as fewer trains than normal will be running.

Martin Frobisher, managing director of Network Rail's London North Western route, said: "We have agreed with our partners at Virgin Trains and London Northwestern Railway to do this work on Easter Sunday as it is typically a far less busy train travel day than usual. Doing this on Easter Sunday means as few of their customers as possible will be impacted. It's the least bad day for it."

Ex-army camp 'could have been business site'

Report by Sue Austin

SHROPSHIRE lost out on valuable light industry land when a former army camp was turned over to agriculture, it has been claimed.

Bill Kerswell was a co-opted member of Shropshire County Council in the 1970s when the Park Hall site, near Oswestry, closed and much of the land reverted to fields.

He said modern-day views that the town desperately needed more employment land showed his call to retain it for industry should have been heeded.

At a recent meeting of Oswestry Chamber of Commerce commercial property expert Stuart Phillip said businesses in the town desperately needed new employment land to be made available. Mr Kerswell was a leading force in seeing the travellers' site created on part of the land at Park Hall in the 1970s, as well as helping to open other sites in the county.

"At the time I said the council should retain the infrastructure of the army camp – the electricity and water was already there – and market the land for employment," he added. "But instead, most of it was turned over to agriculture. It was such a waste. There are former army and RAF sites in the rest of Shropshire that become employment parks and are still valuable business sites." Part of the former Park Hall Army camp is a regional headquarters for BT and there is a small business park nearby. Other land became the Oswestry showground, The Venue sports ground and Oswestry Boys and Girls football club with the rest agricultural land.

Talented musicians celebrate success



The winners from the 2018 Oswestry Youth Music Festival get together

PUPILS from Oswestry School and Bellan House who took part in the recent Oswestry Youth Music Festival have got together to celebrate their success in the competition.

Year 4 pupils Scarlett Forbes, Akaash Das, Oscar Polden and Theo Woodman all received first prizes.

In Year 5 pupils Wang Qi and Freddie Heasmer-Jones also received firsts along with First Form pupil Harris Morgan-Booth.

Sixth Form pupil Tom Barnes won the Cherrington Award for Musical Excellence.

Success also came to the Bellan House ensembles. Bellan Blowers scooped first place and a merit along with the Henry Pelham Memorial Cup, Bellan Giggles placed second in the brass, woodwind and string ensemble class while Bellan Players came third in the same class.

In the youth choir competition first prize went to the Bellan House Year 5/6 choir and second to the Year 3/4 choir.

Brothers Freddie and Bertie Heasmer-Jones placed first in the piano duet. This year saw record numbers of pupils from Bellan House and Oswestry School entered into the Oswestry Youth Music Festival.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Search on for top volunteers

PEOPLE in Powys are being urged to nominate those who go above and beyond in their communities for a prestigious volunteer award.

Powys Volunteer of the Year awards have been running for eight years and acknowledges the invaluable contributions made by volunteers throughout the county and the impact that they have. Carl Cooper, chief executive of Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations, said: "The competition is entering its eighth year, and gives residents of Powys an opportunity to acknowledge the important contribution of volunteers in their local communities, be it from individual volunteers or from volunteer groups." Nomination forms are available from www.pavo.org.uk or by phoning PAVO on (01597) 822191.

Spring fair for cancer research

A SPRING fair will be held to raise money for cancer research.

Oswestry's Macmillan branch will hold the event in the Memorial Hall in the town on Saturday.

Doors will open for the free fair at 10am.

There will be a variety of stalls including homemade cakes, preserves, pies, greeting cards, knitted goods and toiletries.

Refreshments will be available.

The same branch will hold a quiz on the night of April 11.

It will be held at the New Spring Lamb on Shrewsbury Road in Oswestry from 7.30pm for a prompt 7.45pm start.

Teams cost £10 each.

They can include a maximum of four people.

For further information about either event people are asked to call Margery James on (01691) 650334.



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NEWS IN BRIEF

Specsavers in funding drive

SPECSAVERS has donated £10,000 to a charity supporting children with brain conditions, to mark the start of a year-long fundraising partnership.

The Specsavers stores in Newtown and Welshpool are joining forces with 37 other Specsavers stores across south and mid Wales to raise additional funds for Cerebra's support services and research work, with plans afoot for fancy dress days and a 220-mile cycle-thon.

The donation was presented to Cerebra's chief executive, Chris Jones, when Specsavers staff from across the region visited Cerebra's Innovation Centre in Swansea.

Land sale brings in over £280,000

WELSHPOOL Town Council has yielded over £280,000 to re-invest in town centre buildings following the sale of an 18-acre plot of land.

The land at Red Bank, which is owned under the Burgess Land Trust, was sold off at around £16,000 an acre.

The trust was set up in 1761, with the intention of using the money to maintain buildings and council buildings.

The latest sale comes after a host of other plots in the town were sold on.

Town Clerk Robert Robinson said: "The money isn't for the council, it is to be re-invested in council buildings. "This land was for grazing, and it made more sense to sell the land off."

"Other land was sold off before Christmas, and we will decide now where these new funds will go."

Councillor hopes flats will not bring disruption

Report by Jonny Drury

A COUNTY councillor has asked for developers to be sympathetic to local residents after a 17-flat development was given the green light by planners.

Despite strong objections from county councillors, residents and the town council, Mid Wales Properties Ltd successfully had its application to build the flats in Welshpool passed.

County Councillor Graham Breeze argued limited access and over development of the site were two reasons why it should be rejected.

He said: "It has been passed now so we have to get on with it, I just hope it isn't too disruptive for the residents."

"I'm not sure when it will begin, but what I do ask of the developers is that they are sympathetic towards the residents."

"They have had strong objections to this, but it has passed now."

"The bungalow next to the site is going to take a hit, so I hope it won't be too disruptive on them."

The plans for 17 flats brought concerns from members of the planning committee.

Some were concerned about access for residents and emergency service vehicles, on top of the traffic that already uses the area.

However it was argued there had been a previous use of the building, a former social club, and more cars were using the area back then.

AM backing charity's daffodil appeal



Russell George pictured with fellow volunteer Barbara Norbury

MONTGOMERYSHIRE Assembly Member Russell George has pledged his support for this year's Marie Curie's Great Daffodil Appeal.

The appeal backs Marie Curie nurses in their work to provide care and support to people living with a terminal illness. Mr George visited Morrisons in Newtown to help raise funds for the charity's appeal.

As well as lending his support to the appeal alongside fellow volunteer, Barbara Norbury, Mr George is also encouraging people in Montgomeryshire to help the charity raise more money than ever before by simply giving a donation and wearing a Marie Curie daffodil pin, available from volunteers across Wales, from sponsors such as Morrisons, Superdrug, Homebase and many more.

Mr George said: "The money raised from the Great Daffodil Appeal will help Marie Curie Nurses provide care and support to people living with a terminal illness, and their loved ones, in homes across Wales so I was delighted to help support the appeal again this year."

Free Wi-Fi service is installed on Arriva trains

TRAIN passengers in Mid Wales can now benefit from a new free Wi-Fi service on Arriva Trains Wales.

The £1.5m Welsh Government investment means the whole ATW fleet including Pacer trains, Class 153s, and the carriages used on the north-south Express have now been retrofitted to provide free-to-use Wi-Fi for all passengers.

There will be information leaflets available at stations and Arriva will also run an awareness campaign for passengers, handing out free "I love Free Wi-Fi" chocolate treats at busy interchanges. Speaking at a launch event to mark the completion of the on train Wi-Fi project, Welsh economy and transport secretary Ken Skates said: "This rollout should be a real boon to commuters and business users alike. I expect it to make a real contribution to our ambitions for a growing economy with strong businesses in productive regions set out our Prosperity for All Economic Action Plan."

"Importantly, our investment means that Pacer trains, Class 153s, and the carriages used on our north-south Express all now have free-to-use Wi-Fi for all passengers. These trains amount to almost one-third of the fleet. Passengers across the Valley Lines and West Wales - including the Heart of Wales line - will now benefit from this vital connectivity."

"This is another example of our strong record of investment in the current rail franchise where we continue to fund additional services and capacity across Wales."

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Patients were seen 'boarded' on wards during unannounced visit by NHS bosses

NHS bosses who carried out an unannounced visit to Shrewsbury's emergency department found no patient safety issues – but were concerned about "boarding" on some wards, a report has revealed.

A report to Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group's governance board said the county's A&E departments have been facing a high level of demand.

Representatives from NHS Improvement and NHS England visited the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital in February.

The team explored the views of staff on patient care.

It observed the emergency department, acute medical unit, surgical assessment unit and clinical decisions unit.

Report by Lisa O'Brien

The report to the CCG board said: "Due to the pressures in acute systems, an unannounced joint visit with NHS Improvement and NHS England was undertaken in February to review the urgent care pathway at Royal Shrewsbury Hospital to seek assurance that patients were safe.

"The visiting team did not observe any patient safety issues whilst in ED, AMU, SAU or CDU.

"However, the team were concerned that patients remain boarded on these wards, although the appropriate assessments are in place to ensure patients are safe, the patient experience is

affected by being boarded." It said a report is currently being finalised to be sent to Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust, which runs RSH and Telford's Princess Royal Hospital, for "comment and action".

Admission

Boarding is a term used for patients who are awaiting admission, but who are still in the emergency department beyond agreed service standards.

The term also accounts for patients on wards who are not in properly configured beds.

SaTH says such visits are not unusual and form part of the normal assurance process.

It emerged last week that 30 patients were left waiting on trolleys for more than 12 hours

at Shropshire's A&E departments in January.

The CCG has since reviewed reports on the breaches. The report to the CCG board continued: "In all cases there was no harm to patients identified and no immediate actions required to ensure the safety of the patients, staff or public.

"The full root cause analysis investigations continue.

"In the meantime, the learning and actions the trust is taking to address these issues will be monitored by the quality committee."

SaTH was also ranked the worst in the country for its A&E waiting times in January.

Hospital bosses say the trust's top priority is "patient safety".

The trust says it also has plans in place to help care for patients safely at busy times.

Major concerns flagged up in inspection of home

Report by Lucy Todman

MAJOR concerns have been raised about the safety and wellbeing of children living at a care home in Shropshire.

Ofsted inspectors visited the home, the exact location of which is not revealed, and found that facilities were not adequate for the 12 children that lived there.

Run by Amberleigh Care Ltd, the home was inspected in January but the report has only been made public recently.

Inspectors rated it as "inadequate" and on their visit found that the children were unable to access their own bedrooms freely. Staff had to unlock the doors for them and on exiting they had to ring a bell to alert staff to the fact that they were returning downstairs.

There were no communal toilet facilities downstairs which meant that the children were unable to access the toilet without staff's permission.

Records of complaint were not kept and it was not clear what action had been taken should a complaint be made.

Knowledge

Inspectors found that the home used the Good Lives Model but both managers and staff had insufficient knowledge, understanding or training to deliver the model effectively.

Records of house meetings, where issues including improvements to the decor of the home had been raised, were not kept which led to the children feeling undervalued. It was also unclear as to how the children contributed to the day-to-day running of the home.

The report added: "Staff recruitment processes are poor and recruitment checks do not protect young people from unsuitable individuals working in the home. Some staff have started work at the home without adequate reference checks being carried out. Managers have failed to follow up concerning information contained in other recruitment checks fully. During the inspection, the manager showed a lack of awareness about her own responsibilities regarding the recruitment of staff."

Restraint records were not signed off in a timely way which meant that the manager could not be assured that the restraint practice was proportionate and safe.

Managers at the care home have now been told they must improve in a number of areas.

No one was available from Amberleigh Care Ltd for comment.

Brexit fears raised by top finance expert



Former chief executive of the London Stock Exchange Group, Xavier Rolet, was guest speaker at the business lunch at Moreton School

THE former chief executive of the London Stock Exchange Group has reiterated his concerns about Britain leaving the EU during a speech at a school near Oswestry.

Xavier Rolet described Brexit as a threat but hopes a transition period can work for and improve the economy.

He also hopes entrepreneurs are put front and centre during a Brexit transition period.

The French-born financial heavyweight who left the LSEG at the end of last year after nine years in charge was guest speaker at Moreton Hall School's annual business lunch.

He said: "I think it will take some time. Brexit itself – I don't think people know what

Brexit is. Will it be a hard Brexit, will there be a transitional period?

"I think it is a threat to us and I can't help being worried. The solutions are very complex.

"I know there are some very capable politicians in the UK who understand the issues."

Mr Rolet also spoke about financial services, which he said plays a key role in providing growth finance for the UK's 5.5 million small and medium-sized enterprises, boosting high-quality job creation and UK productivity.

Moreton Enterprises, the unique business venture run by the Year 12 girls at the school, also gave its annual business presentation outlining its sales strategy for the year.

Addressing the students, Mr Rolet said: "I don't think imitating us older generation is the way forward. Focus on new ideas and innovation. The younger generation can make a real difference."

During his tenure at the LSEG he took the firm from £800 million to £14 billion in value and was ranked as one of the best 100 CEOs in the world in 2017 by the Harvard Business Review.

A graduate of Columbia University School of Business, between 1984 and 1994 he worked at Goldman Sachs in New York and London, then joined Credit Suisse First Boston as global head of European equities.

Fly-tipping issues anger councillors

COUNCILLORS have reacted angrily to a spike in fly-tipping in Welshpool.

During Keep Welshpool Tidy week, Councillors Heather Chave and Nicola Morris spent a day picking up litter and were shocked by the extent of the problem.

The pair picked up four bags full of rubbish including plastic wrapping off lorries and car bits, and bottles and plastic cups.

During the tidy week, Kathryn Taylor from Welshpool posted online an image of a line of bins with bags piled up next to them in Pentrefelin Terrace, next to Boys and Boden in the town.

The bags had been emptied the following day, but it isn't the first time these incidents have occurred.

Last year residents in the town were issued with a warning that council staff would be looking inside rubbish bags left dumped in the streets in a bid to track down the culprits.

The sacks of fly-tipped waste were on the streets of Welshpool and left dumped next to litter bins.

It came following a spate of fly-tipping incidents in the town. Councillors were looking to introduce body cameras for council staff to catch the culprits, but also wanted to look into the bags to find out who was dumping the rubbish. However councillors dismissed the idea.

Lizzie looks for medal win at games

A WOMAN has moved on from the despair of being paralysed to the excitement of competing in the Commonwealth Games.

When Lizzie Tench was left seriously injured after a cycling accident in 2012 she struggled to come to terms with having to live with a spinal injury.

But after treatment at Oswestry Orthopaedic Hospital she went on a residential course with the charity, Back Up, and hasn't looked back since.

The 43-year-old, who lives on the Cheshire border, has flown out to Australia's Gold Coast to take part in the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

The paratriathlete is hopeful she could return with a medal from the games in which her sport makes its debut.

For her race she will complete a 750 metre sea swim, a 15 mile handbike ride and end with a five kilometre wheelchair 'run'.

She said: "Back Up opened my mind to new possibilities and put me in touch with other people who had gone through everything I was experiencing."

"They had come out the other side and were doing more than just getting by, they were thriving and achieving things I wouldn't have thought possible with a spinal cord injury."

Theatre company going to woods

OSWESTRY Musical Theatre Company will tread the board with Stephen Sondheim's musical 'Into the Woods' in April.

Sondheim's complex storyline tells of Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Jack – of beanstalk fame – and the childless baker and his wife.

Each embark on a journey into the woods to try and fulfil their respective dreams and on the way their individual stories cross and intertwine with each other.

The show's director Kate MacDonald said as to be expected with Stephen Sondheim, things are far from being 'Happy Ever After'.

"We are really excited to be bringing such a classic show as 'Into the Woods' to Oswestry," she said.

"The show which, contains many new younger members of the company, is coming along well and we are looking forward to producing a top class production for the people of Oswestry and its surrounding area."

It opens on April 12 at the Marches School Theatre and has four performances on April 12, 13 and 14 at 7.30pm with a 2.30pm matinee on April 14.

Tickets priced £12/£8 are now on sale from Christian Jewellers, Bailey St, Oswestry.

Flood prevention works to start at popular lake

IT is Wales's largest natural lake, popular with Shropshire holidaymakers and home to a rare, prehistoric fish.

Work to Llyn Tegid/Bala Lake is about to get under way to ensure that the lake's embankments can stand up to extreme weather and protect the town of Bala from flooding.

Natural Resources Wales is beginning ground investigations, the first step in making sure the flood protection is in place now and in the future.

At the last inspection some issues were raised

over the adequacy of the embankments to withstand very extreme events although inspectors say there are no immediate concerns.

Matthew Jenkins, NRW project manager for Llyn Tegid, said: "The huge environmental value of the area and its importance to the local community, recreation and tourism will be fully considered as the work develops. We are committed to keeping communities safe from flooding.

"Over the coming months, there will be surveys and ground investigations at Llyn Tegid,

the first steps in helping us decide what to do. These are likely to be very visible and, while there will be very minor footpath diversions, these should not impact on people's access to the lake and shore."

He said that opportunities to improve the environment and recreation opportunities will also be explored as the project develops.

"It is early days. But once we have identified the extent of the work required, in early summer, we will hold drop-in sessions for people to learn more about it and to listen to the commu-

nity's views and requirements as we design the scheme in detail," Mr Jenkins said.

"We will keep everyone informed about our work at every step of the way.

"At this early stage, it's difficult to give an overall timescale for the project.

"But, construction is extremely unlikely to start until 2019.

"This is part of our work to regulate Llyn Tegid under the Reservoirs Act 1975 and is part of a wider ongoing programme of reservoir safety related work across Wales."

12 Half marathon to boost Hope House charity

Oswestry & Border Chronicle Thursday, March 22, 2018

OSWESTRY'S Hope House Children's Hospice will be among a number of charities set to benefit from the forthcoming Shrewsbury Half Marathon.

The organisers of the half marathon have announced seven local charity partners for the event taking place on June 17. As well as Hope House, partners include Shrewsbury Town in the Community, Lingen Davies Cancer Fund, Severn Hospice, The Harry Johnson Trust, Opportunity Pre-School and food bank PLUS.

Since UKRunChat took over the running of the Shrewsbury Half Marathon in 2016 to great success, the race has been a popular platform for charity fundraising and it is hoped that the 2018 event will help to raise much-needed funds for these local causes.

Runners will be able to take in the stunning sights of the Shrewsbury Half Marathon, which takes them through Shrewsbury's Medieval city centre and out into the beautiful Shropshire countryside, whilst raising money for their chosen charity. They can either apply for a charity place directly through the charity, or sign up for a place on the race website and contact the charity for a fundraising pack.

Go to www.shrewsburyhalf.co.uk/charities for full information about running for charity and further race details.

Bid to reduce use of plastic wins backing

A LOCAL authority has jumped on the anti-plastic wave in a bid to drastically cut down the use of single use plastics.

Powys County Councillors backed a plan at a full council meeting that would see staff and residents become a major plastic reducer.

Green councillor Emily Durrant put the proposal after admitting she was horrified by the amount of disposable cups being used by council members, staff and visitors.

Councillors in the meeting in Llandrindod Wells saw 35 councillors vote in favour of the motion, with none against and one abstention.

The council also said it would look into how it can support and promote a national bottle return scheme within Powys schools and buildings to cut the amount of waste and reduce litter across its roads.

Ms Durrant, who won the Green Party's first ever seat in Powys in May 2017, said she wanted to encourage food and drinks outlets across the county to offer biodegradable alternative to single-use plastic cups. The decision by Powys County Council follows a similar move in Ceredigion, where last month the council voted unanimously to back a motion to reduce the use of plastic and to support plastic reduction initiatives in Ceredigion.

Apprenticeship awards launched

SUCCESSFUL employers, learners and learning providers across Wales are being encouraged to enter this year's Apprenticeship Awards Cymru.

The prestigious annual awards are designed to showcase and celebrate the outstanding achievements of learners, employers, tutors and assessors who have excelled in contributing to the development of the Welsh Government's Traineeships and Apprenticeship programmes.

Application forms are available to download at gov.wales/apprenticeshipaward-symru and the closing date is noon on May 4.

From the applications, finalists in 11 categories will be shortlisted for awards, which will be presented at a high-profile ceremony at the Celtic Manor Resort, Newport on November 9.

In the employability category, there are awards for traineeship learner of the year for engagement and Level 1. There are also awards for the best foundation apprentice, apprentice and higher apprentice of the year.

The business category includes awards for small, medium, large and macro employer of the year, while work-based learning practitioners will compete for assessor and tutor of the year.

Number of pupils permanently excluded from school rises sharply in last two years

THE number of pupils permanently excluded from school in Shropshire has risen by 147 per cent in two years.

Some of the reasons for secondary school students being permanently excluded in the Shropshire Council area so far this year include sexual misconduct, drugs and alcohol, and persistent disruptive behaviour.

Between September and December last year permanent exclusions cost the authority £83,603.26 – an average of £2,812 per student, a new report set to go to the authority's People Overview Committee has revealed.

The report has been ordered for the council committee to assess number of exclusions.

Between September 1 last year and March 1 this year, 34 secondary school students have

Report by Jordan Reynolds

been permanently excluded in the county. This compares to 25 students for the same period the year before, and 17 for the period from September 1, 2015, to March 1, 2016.

For the same time period this academic year, 10 primary school students have been permanently excluded, compared to four the year before and three for the period September 1, 2015, to March 1, 2016.

Meanwhile, 764 secondary school students have had fixed term exclusions in the county between September 1 last year and March 1 this year.

The report says that permanent exclu-

sions should only be used as a "last resort", in response to a "serious breach or persistent breaches of the school's behaviour policy", and where allowing the student to remain at the school would "seriously harm the education or welfare of the student or others".

It adds: "Exclusion always impacts a child negatively, including reduced or no access to education, social exclusion, a 'sense of failure', entering the criminal justice system, increased vulnerability to abuse, and failure to achieve their potential." Students can be excluded for a fixed term multiple times, as long as the total fixed periods in an academic year do not add up to more than 45 days.

In the last academic year there were 20,378 primary students and 15,773 secondary school

students in the county, and between 2015 and 2016 there were 20,135 primary and 15,690 secondary students.

The figures follow a national increase in exclusion rates. The number of permanent exclusions across all state-funded primary, secondary and special schools has increased from 5,795 in 2014/15 to 6,685 in 2015/16, the latest figures show.

Chris Mathews, commissioner for education improvement and efficiency at Shropshire Council said: "Shropshire has had very low rates of exclusions over time. There is a national trend of rising exclusions resulting from a range of factors, including changes to curriculum and funding for schools, and local authorities."

Children's services better 'but has more work to do'

Report by Jonny Drury

A COUNCIL'S struggling children's service is beginning to improve but there is still more work to do, a new report has found.

Powys County Council's cabinet was told that an improvement board has seen significant progress in putting the necessary infrastructure in place with stronger leadership, finance and performance management.

A report in 2017 found that the service was putting children at a serious risk of harm. The update said there were also early signs of progress in staff recruitment and of improvement in social work practice, however further substantial work remained in that area.

Quality social work practice, it's said, is key to improving the service and delivering the outcomes set out in the council's improvement plan for children's services.

Cabinet member for children's services Councillor Rachel Powell said a recent media report over the weekend claiming that the service was unsustainable due to staffing issues was inaccurate and based on historic data covering a period from October to December.

She said: "Current information shows that children's services have a staffing complement of 360. It is made up of 88 per cent permanent or fixed-term posts and the remainder are agency or casual staff. Most of them were brought in to support frontline service delivery following an inspection last year. In February, 15 staff were absent because of sickness, with the loss of 108 working days.

"Children's services are a corporate priority and our recovery plans have been accepted by Care Inspectorate Wales and the Welsh Government. We have an improvement board and they are reporting improvements while accepting there is much work to do."

The council's improvement plan outlines the priority actions needed, including an overall focus on the rights of a child. It also identifies areas where investment is required to support best practice, and the budget for the coming year includes an investment of £6.172 million, which represents a 47 per cent increase.

Councillor Powell added: "They report very early signs of improvement in social work practice, such as timescales for the completion of assessments, frequency of statutory visits and direct work with young people.

"However, it is the case that further substantial work remains in this area."

Half a century of music-making for choir



Members of the Oswestry Orthopaedic Male Voice Choir are looking forward to a busy time in their very special year

A MALE voice choir is celebrating half a century of raising the roof at, and raising vital funds for, a specialist hospital.

The Oswestry Orthopaedic Male Voice Choir was formed in 1968 by staff members at the Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Hospital in Gobowen.

Although there are no staff members in the choir today, it continues to practise at the hospital and the choir has raised thousands of pounds for the hospital's League of Friends over the years as well as helping other charities.

Under its present musical director Isobel Clare the choir began its 50th anniversary year with a concert in Shrewsbury's Theatre Severn as part of St David's Day celebrations.

Teaming up with Newtown Male Voice Choir the groups performed individually and jointly in an ambitious programme of songs in English and Welsh.

With a current strength of 30 active members, the choir will be performing a series of concerts throughout this anniversary year, culminating in a joint concert with the Australian Welsh Male Choir on October 3 in St John the

Baptist Church, Whittington. Chairman Andy Young said: "We are very fortunate in our association with the orthopaedic hospital which gives us facilities to practise and an important local identity.

"We look forward to continuing to provide entertainment for different audiences in this special year, and would be delighted to welcome new members to the choir. No auditions are required, just a desire to sing, a willingness to learn and plenty of enthusiasm."

The choir meets at 7.30pm every Thursday evening in Conference Room 1 at the hospital.

Mental health service has helped reduce waiting lists

A NEW mental health service for young people has helped to reduce long waiting lists, health commissioners have said.

But the emotional health and wellbeing service for Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin has also had to address some teething problems.

South Staffordshire and Shropshire Healthcare Foundation Trust launched the partnership in May.

It was developed following consultation with the public and professionals and has now been used by more than 2,600 people aged up to 25.

Previously, young people were supported by child and adolescent mental health services.

Frances Sutherland, head of commissioning for mental health at Telford & Wrekin clinical commissioning group, told a meeting of Telford & Wrekin Council's health and wellbeing board the service had helped to dramatically cut waiting lists.

She said the trust had also put in additional clinical capacity, leadership and project management support to ensure the partnership was safe.

But she also said problems with the service included too many access points, no systematic way of recording caseloads or care plans and no formally agreed risk assessment processes, which meant high-risk individuals could not easily be identified.

Requirement

Commissioners issued a contract performance notice in November with a requirement for the trust to develop a remedial action plan. The health and wellbeing board was told the

trust had since implemented a new single point of access and all patients were now entered into the clinical IT system. Ms Sutherland said there had been difficulty in recruiting to some posts, with 10 still remaining vacant.

She said: "I feel the service is a lot safer. There are still a lot of problems to work out. "It will probably take us a couple of years to get to the service we want."

The service is delivered in partnership with other organisations and includes online support.

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14 Accountant in VAT fire safety products call

Oswestry & Border Chronicle Thursday, March 22, 2018

AN accountant is urging the public to back a campaign to scrap VAT on fire safety products.

Rob Ellis, of Welch and Ellis Accounting in Oswestry, is throwing his support behind the Axe Safety Tax campaign, launched by company Gas Tag as he believes it is wrong to charge VAT on products designed to save lives.

He thinks the tax is unfair to most small scale landlords who may only own one or two properties, often bought to provide them with a pension or inherited after the death of a family member. The campaign is calling for the Government to scrap the 20 per cent tax which is added to a range of products and services included fire alarms, carbon monoxide detectors, gas safety checks, fire doors and extinguishers.

Mr Ellis, whose office is in Willow Street, said: "At a time when the country is still reeling from the horrendous tragedy of the Grenfell Tower fire, it seems wrong safety products are taxed as though they are luxury items as they are bought by both landlords and the public alike. I would hate to think that anyone would not be able to afford to keep themselves safe because these products had prices inflated by VAT.

"In contrast, annual MOT inspections which are also intended to save lives are zero-rated."

Grants for sports clubs are given out

MORE than £14,000 has been handed out to more than a dozen sport organisations across Mid Wales.

Others are being urged to bid for grants of up to £1,500 to help create thriving sports clubs. The grants are designed to make a difference to sport and physical activity locally and are available through the Sportlot Community Chest, the Sports Council for Wales National Lottery funded grant aid scheme.

Councillor Rachel Powell, Powys cabinet member for sports development, said: "I'm delighted that we have been able to award these grants to the 12 clubs, which will help them thrive and make a difference to sport and physical activity in their area.

"With £90,000 available for this financial year, I'm urging organisations to submit applications so they don't miss out on this grant funding."

Organisations to benefit include: Play Montgomeryshire, £1,000 towards instructor fees and equipment; South Powys Community Football Hub, £1,500 towards instructor fees, facility hire and equipment and Welshpool Cricket Club: £1,230 towards coach education.

The next deadline for applications is April 19. For further information contact (01686) 614060.

Students mark Real Bread Week

STUDENTS at a college near Oswestry celebrated Real Bread Week with a whole host of dough-based activities.

The young people at Derwen College for young adults with learning difficulties and disabilities celebrated the week by offering visitors tasters of the breads made daily to sell at the college's farm shop and eateries.

As well as producing the usual varied selection of loaves and rolls, students Rebecca Spalding and Matthew McCartan tried out new bread toppings and shapes with teacher Clare Morgan.

The college also combined the real bread theme with ideas taken from World Book Day and St David's Day - creating loaves inspired by Peter Rabbit, Three Little Pigs, Harry Potter and Welsh leeks and daffodils, to name just a few.

Home-made baked bread is available to buy daily in Derwen College's Farm Shop and is served with lunch and breakfast menus in the Garden Café and The Orangery Restaurant.

Pete Evans, from the college, said: "Students have had a lot of fun experimenting with different shapes and flavours for Real Bread Week but Derwen's home-made bread is also a serious business. With the support from our baker Angharad Davies, students are learning life and work skills."

Police chief welcomes new report which highlights dog attacks on livestock problems

Report by Jonny Drury

A CHIEF constable has welcomed a national report into the scale of dog attacks on livestock as his force continues to tackle the problem.

A report by the National Police Chief's Council has shown the problems faced by livestock owners and the police tackling the issues.

In 2016 alone, 15,000 sheep were killed by dogs across the UK, costing farmers £1.3 million.

Currently, dog owners are not obliged to make a report to the police if their dog attacked livestock, and attacks are not treated as a recordable crime on police systems. As a result, there has been little reliable police data on the scale of the problem facing farmers and livestock owners. The NPCC's Wildlife and Rural Crime Working Group spent a year looking at

the true extent of livestock worrying and attacks, and has made several recommendations, including placing a legal obligation on dog owners to report that their dog has attacked livestock to the police.

It also asks for the definition of livestock to be amended to take in llamas, alpacas, emus and ostriches, which are subject to dog attacks but not currently covered by the law.

Dyfed-Powys Police Chief Constable Mark Collins said: "We fully support this timely review, and the recommendations made within it, which we believe would benefit both the victims of these offences and the officers investigating

them. There should be a requirement from the Home Office that police forces record attacks on livestock and on animals not currently listed as livestock as a recordable crime. The current situation means that we are missing the opportunity to improve the data picture.

"Because livestock worrying is not a recordable offence, it is difficult to put an exact figure on the cost of these offences.

"However, in 2016 it was estimated that around 15,000 sheep alone were killed by dogs, putting the cost to the farming sector at around £1.3 million - this is unsustainable for the farming community."

The report says dog owners should be obliged to the report the attacks on animals, and chief constable Collins believes owners need to start

taking responsibility for their dog's actions.

He added: "I also believe it is fundamentally important that dog owners take responsibility if their animals attack livestock and report it immediately to police.

"This will allow the livestock owner to attend the scene more quickly, and could potentially save some of the animals involved.

"We have recently launched a rural crime strategy, which outlines our commitment to tackling crimes which occur in rural communities and supporting the victims of these crimes.

"We have also held the first of our quarterly Rural Crime Forums, which is a group formed by the force to bring partner agencies and organisations together to discuss and deal with rural matters."

Council bosses want to 'keep the Powys pound in Powys'

Report by Jonny Drury

POWYS County Council wants to boost the amount of money it spends in the county and is urging businesses to work with it to keep it local.

With an annual spend of more than £140m and as the largest employer in the county by far, the council already has a huge impact on the economy but is determined to do even more and boost local businesses and create job opportunities.

Cabinet member for regeneration Councillor Martin Weale said: "The county council already spends 27p in every pound in Powys and when you consider the size of spending that is valuable to local companies, particularly small and medium sized enterprises, this amounts to £37m. Every additional one per cent spent in Powys means an additional £1.4m will be spent in the economy.

"But, we believe that we can do much more and are committed to increasing our spending within the county boundaries. We want to keep the Powys pound in Powys, it is a key part of the new cabinet's Vision 2025.

"We know that every £1 we spend with local companies generates additional investment and local job opportunities. Like all authorities we have to work within procurement regulations but know that it is not just about getting the lowest price, it is about the getting the best value and doing what you can to boost the local economy.

"Working with a large organisation like Powys is not always easy, meeting terms and conditions or completing complex tender documents can be daunting.

"So we are going to help by holding information events where organisations such as the Welsh Government's Business Wales will help business to improve their tendering skills to be successful in bidding.

"Powys staff will be on hand to provide information about upcoming intended procurements which may interest our local suppliers and businesses. We want to encourage local businesses to work with us, supply us with goods and services and we know to do that they need support to help them through the complexities of local government procurement.

"We are determined to help local companies and that means we will speed up our payment processes as well as use payment cards where possible so that local companies are paid faster and without delay to boost their business."

Waste firm supports rotary club's health drive



Ian Slipper, Angela James and Effie Cadwallader with the manikins which will be used in the rotary club's health campaign

CHILD and baby resuscitation manikins have been presented to Oswestry Cambrian Rotary Club in support of a health scheme.

The manikins were given by Angela James from Veolia, Shropshire Council's waste management company.

The manikins are for a community project to get as many people in Oswestry and the surrounding villages trained in Cardiac Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and how to use a defibrillator.

The rotary club has teamed up with Effie Cadwallader, a local voluntary community

responder from St Martins and British Heart Foundation "Heart Start" trainer, to deliver a two-hour practical training course so local people have basic lifesaving skills.

Club president Ian Slipper said: "We are very grateful to Veolia for their grant to enable us to buy these manikins for our project.

"We are aiming to get as many life savers into our community as we can. We never know when we might be called upon to help a love one or a stranger in a time of urgent need".

If there are any groups of people locally who would like to have their own training session,

they should contact Mike Lade on (01691) 650854.

Veolia, as a celebration of their 10 years of service to the county, provided the manikins for the project and after the presentation Angela gave a presentation on the journey household waste takes once it is put it into the bins The Energy Recovery Facility at Battlefield uses Shropshire's household waste as a fuel to make electricity.

It does not sort the recycling, the Material Recovery Facility at Four Ashes sorts the recycling.

St John Ambulance charity looking for more volunteers

ST John Ambulance is recruiting new first aid volunteers for its teams all over Shropshire, including in Oswestry.

The charity is preparing for a busy summer, providing medical cover at events in the county and further afield.

And new volunteers, keen to support their communities, are needed in Shrewsbury, Telford, Oswestry, Market Drayton and Bridgnorth.

"No previous training is required - it will all be provided - we just look for a desire to help

people and the readiness to deal with situations that can be distressing," said St John Ambulance volunteering lead, Emma Woodward.

"Our event first aiders are trained to a high standard to provide treatment to patients at concerts, sports events etc at local, regional and national levels."

As well as looking after people at everything from village fetes to the London Marathon, St John Ambulance volunteers step forward to help in other ways.

For example the recent snow and ice in the

West Midlands saw them crewing 4x4 vehicles in support of the emergency services.

Volunteers also fundraise to support the charity's work and give public demonstrations of first aid skills.

"First aid is such a simple skill, but it has an incredible impact," Emma added.

"We want everyone to learn it, so that they can be the difference between a life lost and a life saved."

Applications to volunteer in Shropshire can be made online at sja.org.uk/sja/volunteer/

The closing date is April 9 and prospective recruits will be invited to a selection session on April 14, with successful applicants going on to complete training in April and May, ready to go out on duty.

To discuss the opportunity or for further details email Emma at emma.woodward1@sja.org.uk

For more information on St John Ambulance's work, including details of training for the public, schools and businesses, visit www.sja.org.uk or call 08700 10 49 50.

Get out and about over the Easter break

15
Oswestry & Border Chronicle
Thursday, March 22, 2018

Commercial feature

WITH Easter just around the corner and the warmer weather, hopefully, on its way, there has never been a better time to get out and about to enjoy everything the Oswestry and Welshpool areas have to offer.

Oswestry still retains its traditional border market town feel with friendly people and helpful traders.

Like most towns, Oswestry has evolved over the years and although it still keeps its friendly small town welcome, it has plenty to offer both locals and visitors.

The town prides itself on its excellent mix of independent shops sitting side by side with the larger corporate retailers.

Oswestry has a great selection of fantastic restaurants and welcoming coffee shops, making it an ideal town to visit during the Easter break.

The town proudly retains its outdoor and indoor market and the markets still prove a huge draw for many visitors. Oswestry and its surrounding area also has many attractions for people of all ages to enjoy.

Oswestry is surrounded by visitor attractions and history buffs are spoilt for choice with both Whittington Castle and Chirk Castle being very close to the town.

Further afield there is the famous Pontcysyllte Aqueduct on the Llangollen Canal to enjoy while more and more visitors are making a trip to enjoy what the Montgomery Canal has to offer.

Boat trips are already available on the waterway and thanks to the hard work of a team of volunteers hopes are growing each year that the canal will soon be fully restored to allow more people to enjoy it.

The canal runs into Mid Wales where visitors can find a whole host of attractions just waiting to be enjoyed this Easter.

The town of Welshpool is a fantastic place to



Oswestry has plenty to offer and is a great place to enjoy over the Easter break

visit and to enjoy a bit of shopping. Renowned for its wide and varied selection of independent businesses as well as a variety of national chains, Welshpool offers an unique shopping experience.

Its friendly traders and business people always give a warm welcome to visitors and locals alike.

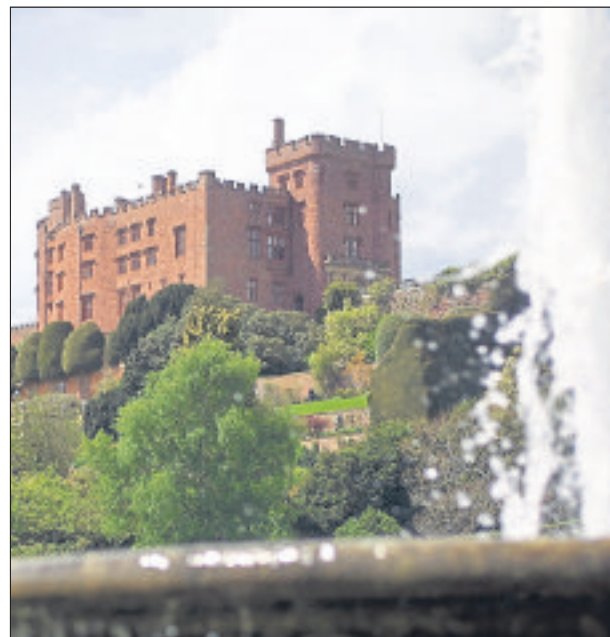
Sitting just four miles from the Shropshire

border, Welshpool attracts visitors from near and far.

Many visitors come to the area to learn more about its history and heritage.

The town was initially known as Pool but its name was changed to Welshpool in 1835 to distinguish it from the English town of Poole.

The town contains much Georgian architecture and is just north of Powis Castle.



Mid Wales has many attractions including Powis Castle at Welshpool

Powis Castle is the main reason many visitors come to the area.

The castle is known for its extensive, attractive formal gardens, terraces, parkland, deer park and landscaped estate.

The property is under the care of the National Trust.

Princess Victoria, later Queen Victoria, visited the castle as a child when her mother took her

to tour England and Wales in 1832. While retail and tourism is an important part of Welshpool's economy, the local economy is primarily based upon agriculture and local industry.

The town's multi million pound Livestock Marketing Centre was completed and opened in November 2009 and is located on a 16 acre site with a 3.25 acre livestock building capable of holding 1,200 cattle and 15,000 sheep.

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16 Fire service boss grateful to companies

Oswestry & Border Chronicle Thursday, March 22, 2018

SHROPSHIRE'S fire chief has thanked companies for their support in employing firefighters who are usually the first to answer emergency 999 calls in their neighbourhoods.

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service chief fire officer, Rod Hammerton, said the service relies heavily on such support in allowing staff to leave their jobs "at a moment's notice".

Mr Hammerton is also appealing for more employers to allow staff to become on call recruits across the county.

Mr Hammerton said: "In our rural county, 80 per cent of our firefighters are on call and live in the communities where they work to keep people safe in any emergency."

"While in Telford and Shrewsbury we need our wholetime firefighters where the population is much larger.

"But without the employers' support, there would not be a fire and rescue service in Shropshire, so I want to thank all of them for taking the trouble to help us and to them that we need you."

Euopa Fastenings MD Stephen Cowan, of Bomore Heath, whose engineer son Daniel is an on call firefighter in Shrewsbury, said employers had to be sympathetic to staff who often lose sleep after being called out during the night.

Pupils step up to battery competition

SCHOOLS across Powys have collected 1.7 tonnes of household batteries after taking part in a recycling challenge.

Powys County Council organised the free battery recycling competition during the autumn school term, which saw over 4,000 school children take part.

The competition encouraged youngsters to collect batteries for recycling, from home and at school, and they collected 1.73 tonnes of domestic batteries between September and December.

Llanbedr Church in Wales School, near Crickhowell, was the competition winners after collecting 4.77kg of batteries per pupil. It will now receive £300 worth of Amazon vouchers. European Recycling Platform, which has sponsored the competition, has donated the Amazon vouchers. ERP also provided the battery collection boxes and arranged the recycling of the batteries. Councillor Phyl Davies, cabinet member for waste and recycling, praised all the schools who took part in the challenge. "Recycling batteries is good for the environment as this conserves resources and saves energy by reducing the need for new raw materials," said Cllr Davies.

"We have estimated that over 78,000 individual batteries have been diverted from landfill thanks to the competition."

Improvements made to website

IMPROVEMENTS to a local authority website are set to make it easier for residents to access information and advice online.

Powys County Council's website, which already had a broad range of information in both Welsh and English with leaflets to download and print, now offers sign language and a new app to make information even easier to access.

The two additions to the website are British Sign Language (BSL) films, and Browsealoud, an app to help people listen to information.

Councillor Stephen Hayes, cabinet member for adult services, said: "Our main aim was to ensure that deaf and deaf blind people have the same opportunities as everyone else, and the same access to education, employment and services.

"BSL is a visual-gestural language, with its own grammar and principles, which are completely different from the grammatical structure of Welsh and English.

"The second addition to the council website was Browsealoud.

"The app adds speech, reading, and translation to the council's website which supports people with dyslexia, mild visual impairments and people who have difficulty in reading."

More than 300 child arrests on school grounds made by police officers in eight years

Report by Lisa O'Brien

many of them involving assaults and criminal damage.

But there were also five arrests on suspicion of rape, 17 for possession of Class A, B or C drugs, 14 for sexual assault and 10 for possessing an offensive weapon or article with a blade.

Children were also arrested on suspicion of arson, possessing indecent images of a child and robbery, among other offences.

Charges were brought against 93 individuals, with more than a third of the accused being 15 years old.

More than 20 of the charges involved criminal damage and 32 were for assault by beating.

Other charges included two rape offences and two sexual assault crimes, according to the figures which were released following a freedom of information request.

Assistant Chief Constable Martin Evans said: "West Mercia Police continues to work hard, alongside our partner agencies, to do all we can to keep the number of child arrests down.

"Our safer neighbourhood teams work in schools across West Mercia policing areas with partners and teachers to deliver programmes that keep children safe.

"Our staff are in schools most days with children and young people of all ages explaining the consequences of actions and highlighting how to stay safe.

"We recognise the potentially damaging consequences the arrest of a child can have, and as such, a number of measures have been introduced to ensure children are only arrested where there are no alternative options available."

He said the police force encouraged officers to use their professional judgment and discretion so the most appropriate and proportionate response is given to each incident.

Assistant Chief Constable Evans added: "It is necessary however, to balance the need to find the best outcome for victims while also ensuring children are not unnecessarily criminalised, and have the opportunity to show remorse and learn from their mistakes. Restorative justice and community resolution outcomes are among the tools we use to help with this."

Funding move 'could hit Powys schools in the pocket'

Report by Jonny Drury

A POLITICIAN has warned the Welsh Government not to slash Education Improvement Grants (EIG) in Wales by £22 million over two years over fears the move will end in Powys schools getting less money.

In a move which could disproportionately affect rural local authorities such as Powys, the Welsh education secretary Kirsty Williams has announced that the money ring-fenced for the EIG will be removed in 2018/19, and made available to local authorities through the Revenue Support Grant (RSG), a funding stream which accounts for 80 per cent of all local authority spending.

Following complaints from council leaders across Wales that their share of the EIG has not been factored into the RSG, leaving a funding shortfall, Mrs Williams has responded by pledging £5 million from school budget reserves.

Mrs Williams states that the reserve money will allocated to Cardiff, Newport and Swansea local authorities to "alleviate the impact" on learners within these local authorities without any mention of authorities such as Powys or the Vale of Glamorgan.

Montgomeryshire Assembly Member Russell George has quizzed the minister and believes these cuts are unacceptable.

He said: "The Welsh Government has previously hid this cut behind a slight increase in overall funding to local authorities via their revenue support grant.

"However, there is no guarantee that any increases in that funding will be passed on to schools and Powys County Council has rightly voiced concerns about this net cut in school funding.

"Unless resolved, these cuts will mean that councils will have to cut other vital services in order to make up for the deficit in their revenue support grants.

"I am very concerned that a number of other grants which have also been amalgamated into the revenue support grant will also be absorbed in a similar fashion, leaving local authorities even worse off after years of sustained Welsh Government cuts to their budgets."

"These cuts must be reversed and local authorities in Wales must all be reimbursed for the money they've lost so that services can continue to support the educational needs of our pupils."

Drone session gives a taste of university life



North Shropshire College students testing out their drones during their challenge

NORTH Shropshire College students recently took part in a drone session and UniFy residential programme talk.

The session involved a selection of students from different courses across the college and was organised by Higher Horizons, a national collaborative outreach programme consisting of ten universities and colleges, along with Jill Cawthray, access co-ordinator at the college.

UniFy, which involves universities including Harper Adams, Chester, Staffordshire and Keele, provides a unique and free opportunity for college learners to experience student life

at university. This includes a series of seminars based on UCAS applications and personal statements, a taste of social events at university and an opportunity to spend time talking to current students and university lecturers.

After a talk from Lizzie Whalley from Higher Horizons, the students were organised into teams and tasked with coding a drone to make a small geographical survey, with the help of Dominic and Liz Surry from Skill Supply. The teams were given two five minute sessions to test, plan, code and execute their given task and thoroughly enjoyed controlling the drones

with the iPads provided. The students were then assessed on their overall accuracy, completion of the task, their team working and problem solving skills.

Jill Cawthray said: "The session was thoroughly enjoyed by the students, and provided them with a unique way to learn more about the UniFy programme and how it can aid their progression to university. I would like to thank Lizzie Whalley from Higher Horizons for coming to talk to the students, and Dominic and Liz from Skill Supply for their fantastic drone session."

Another bidder pulls out of railway franchise race

ANOTHER bidder has pulled out of the running for the next Wales and Borders rail franchise.

Abellio Rail Cymru has dropped its interest in the deal, after it was unable to find an alternative replacement following the collapse of its construction partner Carillion.

Its exit from the process leaves just MTR and KeolisAmey in the running, after Arriva also dropped its interest.

Abellio took its decision after much of Carillion's rail assets were bought by rival Amey.

The franchise operates much of Wales's rail networks.

Montgomeryshire's Conservative AM Russell George has called for assurances that the remaining two bidders will be sufficiently able to deliver the franchise's objectives.

Disappointing

Welsh economy secretary Ken Skates admitted it was more disappointing news ahead of the franchise being awarded by the Welsh Government.

He said: "At this point ARC considered options but elected to stay with its consortium partner, Carillion.

"As a consequence TfW required independent financial guarantees by a bank for Carillion's performance.

"We have two strong bidders remaining in the process and remain on target to award this exciting contract in May 2018 and to transform rail services in Wales and borders from October 2018."

Arriva Trains Wales, who have provided the

bulk of Welsh rail services since 2003, ended its interest in the franchise in October.

Bosses at the company insist it had not been an easy decision. The firm said it had been proud of providing rail transport for Wales for almost 14 years. The company said: "We will continue to work constructively with TfW to help make the next franchise a success and build upon the legacy that Arriva has built with Arriva Trains Wales."

"We remain fully committed to delivering for our customers."

Hundreds of students attend careers convention to plan next stage in their life

HUNDREDS of students from the Oswestry area attended a careers convention to help plan their life beyond school.

The convention was staged by Moreton Hall and organisers said it was a "one-stop-shop" opportunity for Year 11 and Lower Sixth students to find out everything they needed to know about life beyond school whether their interests are academic, creative, vocational or they are planning a gap year.

This year Moreton was joined by 140 sixth formers from local schools including The Marches in Oswestry and Dinas Bran in Llangollen, all keen to make the most of the opportunity.

Driving snow and freezing temperatures could not dampen the mood of the 80 delegates

Report by Jonny Drury

and 250 students arriving in the sports hall for what has become one of the highlights of the Moreton Hall calendar.

This year's event proved to be the most impressive to date, organisers said.

A Moreton Hall School spokesman said: "For Year 11 students, this first glimpse over the fence can seem somewhat daunting, especially with GCSE results still to come and so many options available to them."

"This is where the alumni network comes in to its own with over a quarter of the professional delegates made up of Old Moretonians."

"Claire Watkin, MD of Trendsetter Interna-

tional set the agenda with her keynote address.

"Other seminars were provided by Phoebe Griffith, who talked about her Oxford journey and Jess Lonsdale who was keen to explain that university is not the only route to success, whilst among the many familiar faces were award-winning journalist Jessica Hatcher-Moore, barrister Lucinda France-Hayhurst, interior designer, Imy Edwards, Dr Sarah Bailey, Lieutenant Caroline Mantell and all the way from Jersey, representing Ernst & Young, Laura Turpin.

"For the sixth formers, this second visit to the careers convention is about refining ideas and beginning to make choices. With representatives from a wealth of universities from Edinburgh to Southampton, performing arts

and creative arts providers, study abroad consultants and gap year organisations, as well as the many careers areas on offer, there was something for everyone.

"The delegates were impressed by the future talent on show and students from all schools were commended for the amount of research they had done to prepare for the day; for their polite, confident and engaging manner and for being a delight to meet and talk with."

Head of careers Catherine Ashworth said: "Planning is already underway for next year so please save the date Friday, February 15. We hope it will be another opportunity for you to experience what a parent described as 'very professional and full of high level organisations and delegates'."

Justice bosses insist court will not face downgrading

Report by Keri Trigg

THE final magistrates court in Shropshire will not be downgraded the courts service has insisted – despite remand cases being moved out of the county.

Remand cases currently heard at Telford Magistrates Court will take place in Kidderminster from April 1.

Some solicitors and court staff have raised fears that the move is the first step towards complete closure of the court.

Stephen Scully from Lanyon Bowdler Solicitors said lawyers had also been concerned that the court could be cut back to only hearing first appearances on two days a week from next month. The solicitor also raised fears over the long-term future of the court.

He said: "All other work in West Mercia will go to Kidderminster, which means that a person from Shropshire who hasn't got a solicitor may find they are represented by a firm in South Worcester and vice versa."

"Now remands have gone, it is our view Telford will be closed within a year because it just won't be cost effective to keep open."

Cases

But the Ministry of Justice has promised there are no plans to move more cases out of the area.

A spokeswoman for the Courts and Tribunals Service said: "There are no plans to change its usual practices."

It comes after a meeting between Shropshire solicitors last month, when concerns were raised that moving cases to Worcestershire would cause difficulties for defendants, witnesses and families, particularly from Telford and north Shropshire.

The decision to move all remand cases to Kidderminster on a six-month trial basis was announced after a consultation last year.

At last month's meeting, the solicitors voiced fears that they would be moved to Worcester after that time.

John McMillan from WLB Law said: "We believe the plan is that it will all go to Worcester eventually."

"We think it's a con and don't think it was a genuine consultation."

The Ministry of Justice spokeswoman added: "That is completely incorrect. The idea behind moving remand cases was to streamline the process and make it a bit quicker. That was seen as a positive thing."

Young school sports stars are on their travels



Youngsters from Moreton First will be honing their sports skills when they travel to Jersey for some coaching sessions

WHILE many people will be spending April in Shropshire, a group of students from Moreton Hall School near Oswestry will be heading to Jersey for a five-day sports tour.

A squad of 20 players will be put through their paces during a variety of coaching clinics to improve skills in netball and football.

The finale of their enthusiasm and training will be when the students will compete at the Jersey Games Tournament against many other teams.

The group will also receive educational ses-

sions at Durrell Wildlife Park and some down time to enjoy the local sightseeing.

The group will be accompanied on the trip by Simon Taylor, boys sports co-ordinator of Moreton First.

He said: "This will be a wonderful experience for the students, training alongside and playing against top quality opponents."

"It's a great opportunity for many to improve their tactical skills and fitness."

"We're all very excited."

It's the second sports tour for Moreton First,

who are pushing for new heights in sport with some great results coming in across the board.

The students have been working hard to raise funds for the trip – their bake sale was a particular success.

Alison McDonald, director of sport, said: "Over the Easter period there are 50 pupils going on sports tours from Moreton Hall to either Prague or the Jersey Games."

"It is a very exciting for the school to be taking the children abroad to benefit from the whole sports tour experience."

Service held in tribute to war hero Harold Whitfield

A WAR hero had a service held in his name to mark the 100th anniversary since he was awarded the Victoria Cross.

During the fighting in Palestine members of the Shropshire Yeomanry were pinned down by machine gun fire in Turkish positions.

Harold Whitfield, from Oswestry, then charged and captured the machine gun post single-handedly, and shot the whole of the gun's crew and then turned the gun on the Turkish fighters and led an attack with hand grenades against them.

The war hero drove the enemy back, inflicting severe loss on them and by establishing his own group in the captured position, he saved many lives.

Inspiring

For his inspiring bravery, he was awarded the Victoria Cross 100 years ago.

After the war the soldier continued service, rising to the rank of Squadron Sergeant Major, retiring in 1936 after 28 years of service to his country.

Mr Whitfield was killed at the age of 71 in a collision between his bicycle and an army vehicle in December 1956. He was cycling from his work at the Express Dairies in Whittington to Oswestry when the accident happened.

His Victoria Cross was placed in an Oswestry bank for safekeeping.

But in 1976 the prestigious medal was stolen by a bank clerk who went on to try to sell the medal in London.

A dealer gave him £1,500 but then went on to stop the cheque when he started to investigate

its history. The money was repaid, the medal returned and the bank clerk was given a sentence of 200 hours community service.

In 2000 Mr Whitfield's family presented the Victoria Cross and other memorabilia to Shropshire Regimental Museum at Shrewsbury Castle.

To honour and remember his heroic military actions, a wreath and a photograph of him in uniform wearing his Victoria Cross, was placed on the family grave in Oswestry earlier this month.

Road closure will allow for work to bypass

A MAJOR road in Mid Wales will be closed for two weeks for work on a town bypass.

Motorists are being warned that the A489 Newtown to Kerry road will be closed for a fortnight from April 16 as work on the new bypass reaches a crucial stage.

It will be closed either side of Lower Brimmon Farm to allow complex alignment work between the new bypass and the A489.

Contractor Alun Griffiths has informed Powys County Council it will be working extended hours and weekends and is confident that the measures will ensure that the works will be completed within the two-week closure. However the work is dependent on good weather and subject to unknown ground conditions.

Cabinet member for highways, Councillor Liam Fitzpatrick, said: "The alignment work is complex and requires significant traffic management to make sure motorists and bypass construction workers are safe throughout the operation."

"A number of management operations were considered and the two week closure with a diversion, although frustrating and inconvenient, is judged to cause the least disruption. An infrastructure project the size of Newtown Bypass was always likely to have an impact on the road network and we ask motorists for their patience."

Lottery joy as villager wins £2,000 prize

A VILLAGER in Weston Rhyn near Oswestry is celebrating after scooping the daily prize with People's Postcode Lottery.

Thanks to playing with two tickets, the winner has doubled the win, getting £2,000.

People's Postcode Lottery ambassador Judie McCourt was on hand to offer her congratulations.

She said: "What a great discovery start to the weekend for our winner in Weston Rhyn – I really hope they enjoy spending their prize."

A minimum of 32 per cent of ticket sales goes directly to charities and players of People's Postcode Lottery have raised £282 million to date for 4,000 good causes across Great Britain and internationally.

A local cause near the winner that has received funding is Wales Wheelchair Basketball Association. The group was awarded £2,000 last year to run a beginner's class in the sport.

For more information on People's Postcode Lottery, visit postcodelottery.co.uk

Spiritual centre to meet up again

OSWESTRY Spiritual Centre welcomes back Peter Henry to its group meeting this evening (Thursday).

Mr Henry is from Wirral and uses music to find his connections.

Organisers say Mr Henry's work is amazing to see and is a night of laughter and evidence of friends and family in the spirit world.

The meeting takes place at 7pm at the Cambrian Room in Oswestry's Memorial Hall.

The cost is £3.50 and the meeting runs from 7.30pm to 9pm with doors opening at 7pm.

Guild to hear about whales and gold

MEMBERS Of Oswestry and District Townswomen Guild will be holding their monthly meeting this afternoon (Thursday).

The meeting will take place in the Festival Suite, Memorial Hall, Oswestry. The group meeting takes place from 2pm to 4pm.

Val Laundry from the group said the guild meetings were a great opportunity to socialise and they always had interesting speakers.

He said: "Our speaker this month is Lynne Munden and she is talking about Alaska, whales and gold."

18 Force sees an increase in police officers

Oswestry & Border Chronicle Thursday, March 22, 2018

THE police force serving Mid Wales is one of only three in the UK that has seen officer numbers rise in the last five years, it has been revealed.

New figures have shown there are 29 more officers in the Dyfed-Powys force area currently than there were five years ago, which equates to a 2.6 per cent rise.

The number of neighbourhood officers and police community support officers has also risen since 2012, with an extra 31 in the community in 2017 compared to five years ago.

With police officer numbers down in other force areas, Dyfed-Powys Police has bucked the trend and recently police and crime commissioner Dafydd Llywelyn announced a five per cent rise in police council tax to protect the number of officers on the force.

A freedom of information request in 2017, found that West Mercia Police officer numbers had dropped by more than 300 in the last seven years.

As of April 2017, there were 2,079 serving police officers, which is 345 less than in April 2010.

Earlier this year it was revealed that the number of offences committed in England and Wales had risen by 14 per cent, while the number of officers had plummeted to a record low.

MP shares his view on health move

FORMER health minister and Ludlow MP Philip Dunne has spoken out about who he believes should take over the running of Shropshire's community health services.

Shropshire Community Health NHS Trust is expected to be acquired by another organisation this year.

Two trusts are in the frame – Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust (SaTH) and South Staffordshire and Shropshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (SSSFT). Mr Dunne said: "As I am no longer a health minister, I can now confirm publicly that I believe the best solution would be for some activities of ShropCom such as children's psychology to go to SSSFT, and responsibility for the community hospitals, community nursing, and most other services in the community should go to SaTH. SaTH has a vested interest in working with local GPs and others delivering primary care in south Shropshire to ensure high quality care for local people in the community, helping reduce pressure on beds in our acute hospitals."

The process to find a new partner to run the trust's services has been delayed. The process is being led by NHS Improvement, but the regulator has now asked for more time to evaluate the submissions made by the two organisations on the shortlist.

Spotlight put on apprenticeships

BOSSES at Oswestry Orthopaedic Hospital have spoken of how apprenticeships have benefited their workforce.

Over the years the hospital has seen apprentices successfully gain employment in a number of clinical and non-clinical areas.

Allen Edwards, training advisor at the hospital, said "Apprenticeships are an excellent opportunity for an individual to earn, gain work experience and achieve qualifications at the same time.

"They are nationally recognised, work based training programmes designed to train new or existing employees aged 16+.

"The trust really benefits from all apprentices, it allows the organisation to grow new talent and develop a more motivated workforce.

"I think looking back it really highlights the benefits apprenticeships have not just for us as a trust but also for these individuals, who are employed by us today off the back of successfully completing an apprenticeship with us." For further information about the apprenticeships available at the hospital, people should contact Allen Edwards on (01691) 404095 or at Allen.Edwards@orjah.nhs.uk.

A specialist orthopaedic hospital the trust provides elective orthopaedic surgery and musculo-skeletal medical services.

Partnership is established to help shape the future of maternity services in county

Report by Lisa O'Brien

setting up around the county. Fiona Ellis, programme manager for the Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin maternity system, has been involved in setting the partnership up.

She said: "It's really exciting.

"This is a real chance for women to drive change.

"It brings their voices up so they are equal to professionals."

She said the Shropshire MVP is in the early stages of development so there is plenty of time for anyone wanting to be involved to get in touch.

A MVP board is already in the process

of being set up and is chaired by Jane Randall-Smith, chief officer at Healthwatch Shropshire.

A co-ordinator has also been appointed to help drive the partnership forward.

Ms Ellis added: "We are starting to find out who would like to be involved and how they see the MVP working.

"The MVP board will hold meetings but there will be lots of other activities happening that people can also get involved in.

"People are talking about having champions across the county.

"They can get people interested and gather feedback. It will be about gathering feedback to inform change."

The views of the MVP will inform the work

of the Shropshire local maternity system plan.

The plan aims to ensure that midwives and the broader workforce involved in supporting women and their families play a crucial role in enabling every child to have the very best start in life and in reducing health inequalities.

Ms Randall-Smith said: "The local maternity system plan aims to turn the vision of the national Better Births report into a reality for the residents of Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin.

"We are committed to listening to, and meeting the needs and desires of mothers, so it is essential that we hear their voices as we move forward. I would urge anyone with an interest to get involved."

Anyone interested can email maternity.voices@nhs.net

A483 road bridge 'should have got safety barriers'

Report by Sue Austin

THE repair of railings on a busy road bridge high above a valley near Oswestry should have included the installation of a specialist safety barrier, a local councillor has said.

Councillor Terry Evans fears that with only a railing between the A483 Chirk bypass bridge and the River Ceiriog 142 foot below it is only a matter of time before there is a major tragedy.

Councillor Evans who represents Chirk has been campaigning for a reinforced safety barrier for several years.

He said: "They have them on railway viaducts and also other road bridges.

"I have seen them many times on flyovers in London.

"It is an added barrier that means the vehicles can't drop off the bridge."

Damaged

The railings on the bridge's northbound carriageway were damaged in a crash last year and have remained un-repaired with a speed restriction and narrow lanes on the road for about nine months.

They were finally replaced last week.

Councillor Evans said: "I cannot believe that all they have done is replace what was there with the same type of railings.

"I have been calling for a safety barrier for years.

"I have no doubt that there will be a tragedy on that bridge with multiple deaths if there is not a way to prevent vehicles from going over the side."

In 2015 two brothers escaped serious injury when the tractor they were travelling in stopped inches from falling off the bridge, one wheel hanging over the parapet.

In 2010 several cows in a cattle wagon involved in a crash plunged to their deaths.

The bridge is one of two close together on the A483 between Oswestry and Wrexham. The second one crosses the River Dee.

"The other bridge does not have the same number of accidents," Councillor Evans said.

"I think it is because this one has a fast stretch approaching from Wrexham and also drivers heading towards Wrexham are anticipating the three lane section of road.

"As well as the fear of a terrible crash we in Chirk have to put up with traffic diverted through the town when there is any problem on that bridge."

Series of fairs is lined up for gardening fans



A number of plant hunters' fairs will take place at various locations in and around Shropshire in the coming months

GARDENERS on the look-out for something new to fill their gardens with colour and fragrance are being urged to attend an event near Oswestry.

A plant hunters' fair will be held at Whittington Castle on Friday next week.

Entry to the fair and grounds is free and it costs £1 to park on site.

The fair at the castle is one of a series of plant hunters' fairs in the region.

A fair will take place at Bodenham Arboretum near Kidderminster on March 31.

On Easter Sunday and Monday the fair will

be at Dorothy Clive Gardens, near Market Drayton.

A fair will take place at Battlefield 1403 near Shrewsbury on April 21.

And then on April 29 Cholmondeley Castle Gardens near Malpas is the host.

On the Early May Bank Holiday Sunday and Monday Plant Hunters' Fairs returns to the grand setting of Weston Park, on the A5 just off the A41.

Organisers said there will be much to see and do with woodland walks, formal gardens and kids adventure playground. They say the entry

price of £3 for the fair, gardens and grounds is such great value.

Janet Blow of Plant Hunters' Fairs said: "We are really excited with our spring line up of plant fairs at all these inspirational gardens and with many of our favourite nurseries.

"We hope every plant lover can visit our fairs and enjoy that perfect day out without having to break the bank and support these wonderful specialist growers.

"You can find out which nurseries will be at each event and see the full calendar of fairs by visiting www.planthuntersfairs.co.uk"

Eye care services to take new cases for first time in year

TWO eye treatment services in Shropshire will begin taking new referrals next month for the first time in more than a year.

Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust's ophthalmology department temporarily suspended referrals for glaucoma last year, as well as general and adult squint referrals, in order to clear a backlog and reduce waiting times.

Ophthalmology deals with the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of diseases of the eye and visual system.

SaTH is now expected to be able to take new glaucoma and general ophthalmology referrals from April 1 after recruiting ophthalmologists.

Adult squint surgery services are also expected to reopen to new patients later this year.

A report to Shropshire clinical commissioning group (CCG) says the reason for the delay is because a new consultant needs additional training. In the report to the board Bethan Emberton, commissioning and redesign lead planned care, said: "After the successful recruitment of staff, redesign of estates and tri-

als of innovative ways of working, SaTH has proposed a re-opening date of the April 1 for glaucoma and general ophthalmology services.

"Adult squint surgery services will, however, remain closed. This is because the new consultant needs additional training.

"This will take a few months so this particular service may not reopen until the end of 2018. SaTH has explored sub-contract arrangements for this service but has been unsuccessful.

"SaTH does remain open for orthoptic re-

views for adult squint as the majority can be treated with glasses and exercises."

The report says the ophthalmology service has been under considerable pressure for a number of years, with staffing being one of the challenges.

Dr Prasad Rao, consultant ophthalmologist and clinical director for ophthalmology at SaTH, said: "Leading up to the closure 12 months ago, we had five senior doctor vacancies and we were unable to meet the levels of demand on the service."

LIFE IN AND AROUND THE MARCHES



Sitting along and around the border between England and Wales, The Marches, as many will now, is a beautiful area to work, live in and visit.

Bustling market towns such as Shrewsbury, Oswestry and Ludlow sit alongside tranquil villages and miles of unspoilt countryside.

Life in The Marches offers something for all. Its towns provide popular markets, plenty of entertainment opportunities and many fantastic attractions.

Families choose to come to live in The Marches because of its peaceful lifestyle, historic towns, superb shopping and top notch educational

opportunities. With having so much to offer, it is no surprise so many of the country's leading firms choose to set up business in The Marches while many of the home-grown enterprises regularly seal national awards for the excellent services they provide.

Like everywhere in the country, The Marches is forever changing and evolving.

Housebuilding and infrastructure development is very much in the spotlight as the region looks to build for a prosperous future.

But despite the inevitable changes, the spirit of The Marches will not be lost which means many will continue to be happy to live and work in this beautiful and special region of Britain.

A FOUR PAGE SUPPLEMENT



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Innovative ideas help pull in shoppers to market hall

From handmade single origin chocolate Easter eggs to locally sourced lamb and everything in between, Shrewsbury Market Hall is a destination for quality fresh produce and artisan foods and seasonal treats.

The covered market, which nestles beneath Shrewsbury's towering clock tower in the centre of town, recently won the title of Britain's Favourite Market 2018.

It was an award won thanks to its eclectic mix of quality food and craft stalls, creative street food cafes, home and gift boutiques and a whole raft of other quirky, vibrant, independent businesses.

For almost a year now the Market Hall has been running regular Saturday late night events which have proven popular, got it talked about and helped to attract a new audience of fans through the door.

The Market Hall is gearing up for its next late night event on Saturday April 7.

Bars and street food cafes, ranging from Thai to tapas, will be open late, along with a selection of retail stalls, until 10pm.

"These evenings are popular with all types of people," said Market Facilities Manager Kate Gittins.

The Market Hall late nights have a unique atmosphere where families and friends can relax in a large open environment whilst enjoying food, drink and a mooch around some of the home



There is a huge variety of delicious food available at the market hall

accessory, gift, art and craft and book stalls.

Late night dates for the rest of the year are: June 2, September 1 and

November 3. Shrewsbury Market Hall will be open normal shopping hours on Good Friday from 9am to 4pm, bosses have said.



A trip on The Vale of Rhedol Railway allows visitors to enjoy some of Wales's most spectacular scenery

All aboard for super scenery

IT is all aboard for 12 miles of stunning scenery – The Vale of Rhedol Railway is steaming up for 2018.

Trains are now running daily until November 2, so why not visit and enjoy a train ride surrounded by stunning views. A spokesman for the railway said: "Travelling on the Vale of Rhedol Railway is the finest way to explore the stunning Rhedol Valley.

"Opened in 1902, the railway is a masterpiece of engineering and has been delighting passengers for

generations. Although the line no longer carries lead ore from the mines, it has been carrying tourists to the beauty spot of Devil's Bridge for over a hundred years!

"The journey starts in Aberystwyth, (just a stone's throw from the main railway station) in the heart of Cardigan Bay and runs for 12 miles to Devil's Bridge, in the Cambrian Mountains.

"Watch the countryside changing as you travel through wide open fields, ancient woodland and rugged mountains scenery, on the climb to

Devil's Bridge, home of the famous Mynach Falls. On arrival at Devil's Bridge, why not visit our Pine Marten Den exhibition (opening April) that celebrates the recovery of the pine marten in Wales.

"You will then have time to visit the amazing water falls, or relax for some lunch or afternoon tea at either the Two Hoots café at the station or the charming Hafod Hotel.

"Let us take you on a nostalgic trip through some of Wales's most spectacular scenery!"



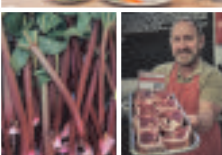
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Build a future with Primesave

Commercial feature

New build homes are now available at Meadowdale, Llanymynech, through Primesave Properties

Local new homes developer Primesave Properties launched its first development in Llanymynech in 2017. Meadowdale is a collection of two, three and four-bedroom homes.

Following the success of the first phase, phase two of the development has now officially launched with a selection of four bed family homes, and two local needs plots now available to reserve. The first phase of the home development was released in spring 2017, with over 90 per cent of the first phase bought off plan. The first phase included a number of two and three bed starter homes, which offered local buyers the opportunity to buy a new home, which they could personalise.

The second phase of the project will see the development of a number of four bed family homes, starting from £249,950. The new homes are perfect for home owners looking for a step up from their first home, or for growing families looking for a central base in Mid Wales, where they can enjoy the benefits of rural living, but with town centre amenities only a short drive away. With potential to personalise the home design by buying off-plan, if you are looking for a new family home in Mid Wales, now is the time to get in touch.

Meadowdale in Llanymynech also has two local needs plots available, offering local people assistance to get on the property ladder from £79,000, with a new home tailored to them.

As there are a limited number of local needs



The Primesave team will help you to build a home perfectly tailored to your individual lifestyle and taste

plots available, and eligibility requirements that new home owners will need to meet, it is recommended that you get in touch with the team today to find out if you could own a new Primesave home.

Primesave Properties are also breaking ground at a second new homes development in Mid Wales in spring 2018, with Heritage Green in Forden officially launching.

Based in beautiful Mid Wales, the development includes 23 properties – a

mixture of two, three and four-bedroom homes, expressions of interest and reservations are now being taken for the development.

The new site in Forden includes two, three and four-bedroom homes along with a spacious three-bedroom bungalow, all of which are proving to be hugely popular after initial marketing.

At Primesave Properties, we aim to work with home buyers to make the buying and moving in process as easy as possible for every

home – so homeowners can enjoy the buying experience from the first moment to receiving the keys.

This includes providing buying support from flexible deposit options through to legal support and more.

Once you've decided which Primesave home is right for you, our team will help you to build a home, perfectly tailored to you – including different kitchen options, choosing carpets and amending internal layouts to suit your individual



Primesave has superb homes to suit all families

lifestyles and tastes. Primesave Properties are already taking reservations for our second phase of homes at Meadowdale, Llanymynech, and at Heritage Green, Forden – so if you are looking for a new home in 2018, please get in touch. Primesave Properties have a number of additional developments planned for 2018, in and around Mid Wales, North Wales and Shropshire – find out more about our current and upcoming developments online – visit www.primesave.co.uk.



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For more information on Meadowdale contact our selling agents:



Contact Keri on 07590 445983 or visit our website for more details: www.primesave.co.uk



College's lambing day has something for all to enjoy

North Shropshire College is planning for the annual Spring Lambing Day event which takes place at the Walford Campus.

This year the fun-filled event will take place on Sunday from 10.30am to 4.30pm with tickets costing just £10 per car/family on foot.

The college's large flock of ewes have lambed over the weeks leading up to the day.

In addition to the lambs which are the stars of the show, the event offers a variety of fantastic attractions for families to take part in.

On the farm, visitors will be able to watch our futuristic robotic milking machine in action, along with the farm animals being fed.

This year there will also be a lamb cuddle corner and a pony club equine display. The event will also see the grand unveiling of North Shropshire College's new milk vending machine by a VIP guest at 11.30am.

The fun doesn't stop there, on the adjacent side of the campus there will be a range of exciting activities taking place ensuring everyone can join in.

There will be live music in the walled garden, face painting, a climbing wall and the Walford Zoo will be open where our alpacas, meerkats, reptiles and marmoset monkeys are all located.

Refreshments will be available to purchase, however visitors are welcome to bring a picnic if desired.

Lucy Evans, Marketing and Customer Service Manager at the college,



Chloe Edwards, Schools Liaison and Marketing Co-ordinator at North Shropshire College, with a new arrival at the Walford Campus farm

said: "The day offers a wonderful and affordable experience with a wide range of activities to take part in suitable for all the family.

"Visitors can expect to see lots of lambs and every year there are new lambs arriving for those lucky to be in the right place at the right time.

"We can't wait to build on the previous years' success and are looking forward

to another fun filled Spring Lambing Day." If you would like to have a stall or host an activity at the event, contact Penny Hardy on p.hardy@nsc.ac.uk or 01939 262187.

Visitors can park on campus (SY4 2HL) or you will be able to take part in the Park and Ride. There is no need to pre-book, just come along on Sunday any time between 10.30am to 4pm.



The impressive Oswestry indoor market offers a warm welcome to shoppers from near and far

A friendly welcome awaits

As anyone who knows Oswestry will tell you, the town is a great place to live, work and shop.

Shoppers come from near and far to enjoy everything the town offers.

The town is renowned for its mix of independent retailers who operate alongside some of the best known high street chains.

The warm and personal service the small independent businesses give to shoppers means people come back to the town centre time and time again. Oswestry also has its fair share of

supermarkets and large food stores.

Oswestry has a proud history as a market town and its markets continue to be a vital part of community life.

The markets provide a diverse, and often unusual, range of interesting stalls, selling and providing a vast range of services.

Markets have been a major part of the trading and historical importance of Oswestry and have existed for many centuries.

The indoor market enjoyed a revamp in 2012 after winning an online voting

competition in The Times newspaper, in association with design company, My Deco.

Oswestry's outdoor market on the Bailey Head is also an important feature of the town.

Oswestry has many attractions for people of all ages to enjoy.

One of the best things about Oswestry is its community spirit. And that community spirit means there is always plenty of events, activities and festivals going on in Oswestry throughout the year.

COME ALONG TO OUR SPRING LAMBING DAY



Here is a taste of what's on offer...

New-born Lambs - you may even see a lamb being born if you are lucky! Come and see our animals, we have over 90 species from Snakes and Chinchillas to Meerkats and Alpacas!

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Excellent barn conversion in superb private location

An excellent barn conversion, Oak Barn at Stanwardine Park Farm at Stanwardine, combines an exemplary finish with a superb private location, landscaped gardens and paddocks.

Set two miles from Baschurch and with Oswestry and Shrewsbury each some 10 miles away, it is for sale through Balfours at £625,000 with no chain.

Balfours agent, Duncan Scobie said: "It is the former Jinney ring which provides the ultimate wow factor, in this wonderfully proportioned home with four en-suite bedrooms."

Now forming part of the living room and incorporating a raised wood burner, the Jinney Ring area was where once a horse-powered mill worked, hence an octagonal footprint with today's floor to ceiling glazed elevations.

In the main house is the spacious eight metre by nearly five metre kitchen/breakfast room. This has a substantial granite topped island, bespoke oak cabinets plus an array of top of the range integrated electronics.

The library is fitted with floor to ceiling classic shelving, while similar to the dining room, dual aspect floor to ceiling glazing ensures ample natural light.

A utility and cloakroom complete the ground floor accommodation.

Stairs ascend to a long landing which gives access to the master and guest bedroom with generous en-suites, together with two additional bedrooms with en-suite shower rooms.

Outdoor features include a private driveway, walled, well stocked gardens and a courtyard which runs the length of the property. There are two paddocks extending to 3.2 acres and a number of outdoor storage sheds.

The barn has been finished and maintained to a very high standard with solid oak double glazed windows and doors and oak flooring and kitchen.

KEY FEATURES

An exemplary barn conversion

With paddocks

Superbly finished

Four en-suite bedrooms

Features former Jinney Ring

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17th century home offers highly flexible accommodation

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£725,000

Little Hope, at Hope, Leighton near Welshpool is a 17th century cottage that has undergone a large extension.

Currently run as a bed and breakfast business, its flexible layout means it also provides for two co-habiting families, with separate quarters. In a design which flows with exceptional clarity and focus as a property with an option for two halves, it is for sale through Balfours at £725,000.

The main cottage comprises a porch, a large sitting room with an inglenook fireplace, woodburner and French doors. Adjacent is the library with glazing and views to two aspects and the study – a cosy hideaway. The morning room is the central point of the ground floor from which the stairs ascend to three bedrooms and a family bathroom. Beyond the morning room, the dining room is partially open plan to the kitchen, achieving a fabulous social space



with sleek contemporary fixtures in the kitchen. A second study, cloakroom/WC and utility complete the ground floor accommodation.

Duncan Scobie of Balfours, said: "Evelyn and Mike Gregory have nurtured Little Hope to create a fresh and spacious home, together with a highly successful bed and breakfast business. The latter is run as Long Mountain Bed and Breakfast, which has received many awards and certificates of excellence, from Visit Wales and Trip Adviser. The guest accommodation reflects this, it provides three spacious double bedrooms, one with an en-suite bathroom and the other two with en-suite shower rooms. A large guest dining/lounge spanning nearly six metres square and an independent guest kitchen allow the guest accommodation to be run totally separately; or for an extended family to enjoy."

Contact Balfours on 01743 353511.



Recently modernised home within walking distance of town

OSWESTRY
£325,000 >>>

A recently modernised three-bedroomed detached home within walking distance of Oswestry has a lovely outlook across Oswestry Cricket Ground.

Having well-proportioned accommodation, the property on Morda Road is for sale through Bowen Son & Watson at £325,000. With gas central heating and double glazing, it has an entrance hall, a cloakroom/WC, a lounge, kitchen, breakfast area, a dining room and a sun room. There are three good-sized bedrooms and a family bathroom. Outside the garden has an enclosed lawn area with a patio. There is a gravelled driveway to the front and a rear driveway leading to the double garage with electric doors.

The town centre is a short walk away and has a host of shops, restaurants and other amenities.

Contact Bowen Son & Watson on 01691 652367.



Detached house with valley views comes with a large decked area

GARTH
£374,950 <<<

An individual detached house with valley views and first floor open plan living, Tyn-Y-Pistyll at Garth, Glyn Ceiriog, comes with a large timber decked area, landscaped gardens and woodland.

It is for sale through Morris Marshall & Poole at £374,950. Briefly the property comes with three bedrooms, a shower room and a bathroom.

A turning timber-built staircase rises up from the entrance hall to the upper level lobby with a tiled floor and external door to the rear.

Access leads through to the living area which has a multi-fuel stove fitted to the slate built fireplace, being dual aspect with a large picture window to the rear and concealed radiators. An open plan approach leads through to the dining/kitchen.

Contact Morris Marshall & Poole on 01691 679595 for more information.

Spacious three
bedroomed
detached home is
set on a large plot

KNOCKIN
£320,000 >>>

In a sought after location found down a private driveway, Dunvegan at Knockin is a spacious three bedroomed detached bungalow set on a large plot.

It is for sale through Town & Country at £320,000 with no chain.

The accommodation briefly comprises a large hallway, lounge, kitchen, conservatory, three good sized bedrooms and bathroom.

Outside the property benefits from a large driveway with parking for six vehicles, a double garage and attractive rear and side gardens with mature shrubs.

The property is warmed by oil fired central heating and benefits from double glazing throughout. Located in the village of Knockin, this is just eight miles from Oswestry and 13 miles from Shrewsbury.

For more details contact
Town & Country on 01691
679631.



Spacious detached
house enjoys some
stunning views

TREFONEN
OFFERS INVITED

Kappara, Spring Bank, Trefonen near Oswestry is a spacious detached house with stunning views towards The Shropshire Plain.

Being a short distance of the village amenities, it is for sale through JJ Dell & Co with no chain. The property occupies a quiet elevated position in Trefonen which has a public house, church, shop, sought after primary school and is convenient for the border market town of Oswestry. The accommodation is set over four floors with four half staircases and has oil fired central heating and double glazing.

It has a covered porch similar to a large front veranda, a reception hall with stairs off, a lounge with a marble fireplace, patio doors and a fitted carpet.

The sitting room has a brick fireplace, patio doors and a fitted carpet. Off the first floor is a galleried landing. A study has fitted office furniture and laminate flooring. The dining room has fitted carpet and there is a cloakroom/WC. The kitchen has a range of modern oak



units comprising of matching wall and base cupboards. The utility has a second sink, worktop, plumbing for a washing machine, matching wall and base cupboards, a fitted store cupboard and an oak stable external door. On the second floor is bedroom one with a dressing room and an en-suite and bedroom two. The third floor galleried landing has a large airing cupboard. The bathroom has a five piece suite including a whirlpool corner bath and a bidet. There are three further bedrooms on this floor.

Outside, the property is approached over a tarmacadam drive providing ample car parking leading to a detached double garage and a top floor store room/play room.

Contact JJ Dell & Co on 01691 653437.



Period property
in town retains
a wealth of
original features

OSWESTRY
£174,950 <<<

In an attractive established residential area, Y Bwthyn on Weston Avenue in Oswestry is a period semi-detached house retaining a wealth of original features.

Within walking distance of the town centre, it is for sale through JJ Dell & Co at £174,950 with no chain. It is also close to schools and colleges.

With gas central heating it has an entrance hall, a living room, dining room, a kitchen, three bedrooms, a bathroom, cloakroom/WC, a front garden and a large rear garden with a patio area and two store sheds.

Outside, the front entrance is approached via a gated pathway and bordered by a low hedge. The front garden is lawned and there is a large lawned garden to the rear with side access, two store sheds and a patio area.

Contact JJ Dell & Co on
01691 653437 for more
details.





Property prices dip but high demand to keep market going

Property prices in the UK fell slightly by 0.3 per cent in February to an average of £210,402 with annual growth also down at 2.2 per cent, the latest lender index shows.

But overall housing market activity is expected to slow only modestly as unemployment and interest rates remain low by historic standards as high demand and low supply keeps the market going, according to the report from the Nationwide.

The lender is predicting that house prices will be broadly flat, with a marginal gain of around one per cent over the course of 2018.

"How the housing market performs in the year ahead will be determined in large part by developments in the wider economy and the path of interest rate," said chief economist Robert Gardner.

"Brexit developments will remain a key factor, though these remain hard to foresee. We continue to expect the UK economy to grow at modest pace, with annual growth of one per cent to 1.5 per cent in 2018 and 2019.

"Subdued economic activity and the ongoing squeeze on household budgets is likely to exert a modest drag on housing market activity and house price growth," he added.

Challenging

But experts are warning that even with a flat market affordability for first-time buyers will remain challenging.

"Purchasing a property in today's market can leave many feeling exhausted and disheartened by the process," said expert Jeff Knight.

Jeremy Duncombe agrees. He said: "Competitive mortgage deals and Government schemes should give more and more would-be buyers the opportunity to step onto the property ladder. Affordability, is however still a main cause for concern," he pointed out.

Limited supply is continuing to act as a bottleneck, squeezing many potential buyers out of the market, according to Richard Sexton, director of e.surv.

"Saving for a deposit is one of the biggest challenges would-be home owners face," he said.

The firm's most recent mortgage monitor showed that only 17 per cent of loan approvals went to borrowers with small deposits in London.

"Although we have seen a commitment from the Government to address our housing crisis with an exemption of stamp duty for first-time buyers, only time will tell if this has been enough to fully support them," he added.

First-time buyers seeing more mortgage applications backed

There has been a significant rise in the number of first-time buyer mortgage applications via intermediaries being approved in the UK as access to home lending improved for this sector.

The latest mortgage market tracer from the Intermediary Mortgage Lenders Association (IMLA) shows that 74 per cent of first-time buyers' mortgage applications resulted in a completion during the fourth quarter of 2017, up from 53 per cent in the same quarter in 2016.

The figures also show that nine in 10, some 88 per cent, of first-time buyers secured a mortgage offer, up from 73 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2016. Some 84 per cent of these offers went on to complete compared to 72 per cent in the previous 12 months.

UK Finance data recently showed that first-time buyer numbers reached a 10-year high in 2017 and the IMLA's report suggests that this was helped by a rise in offers. Overall, it meant that 71 per cent of first-time buyer applicants achieved their aim of securing a mortgage in 2017, compared with 50 per cent in 2016.

The report points out that the situation for first time buyers has improved without a noticeable change to the burden of mortgage repayments they are taking on.

In December 2016, UK Finance data shows average first-time buyer mortgage repayments were equivalent to 17.4 per cent of income. This remained largely stable throughout 2017 and actually fell to 17.1 per cent of income in December 2017.

The average loan to value also reduced slightly from 82 per cent in December 2016 to 81.4 per cent at the end of 2017 as first-time buyers' average borrowing remained stable as a proportion of the overall price paid for their homes.

The IMLA also points out that improving product availability, persistently low



interest rates and strong competition between lenders and a cooling of house price growth have all helped first-time buyers' along with the continuation of the Help to Buy equity loan scheme. IMLA's data suggests first-time buyers' fortunes have improved more than any category of borrower in the last year.

For every 100 applications, an additional 21 first-time buyers completed on a mortgage in the final quarter of the fourth quarter of 2016. The next biggest improvement in terms of access to mortgage finance was among specialist borrowers, with the completion rate rising from 61 per 100 in the fourth quarter of 2016 to 73 in the final quarter of 2017.

Home movers saw the biggest quarterly

improvement at the end of 2017 and were the only group to enjoy a greater success rate with mortgage completions in the fourth quarter of 2017 at 77 per 100 applications compared with 74 in the third quarter.

Despite wider uncertainty in the UK's economic outlook, the improving performance of the mortgage market last year meant that intermediaries have approached the New Year with confidence about their prospects for 2018, the report also reveals.

Overall, 95 per cent were confident about the outlook for the mortgage industry in the fourth quarter, unchanged year-on-year, while 56 per cent were very confident about the outlook for the intermediary

sector in particular, up from 52 per cent a year earlier. In terms of their own business' activity, some 64 per cent were very confident about the outlook in the fourth quarter of 2017, up from 61 per cent at the end of 2016.

"The mortgage market has proved itself to be resilient over the last year and intermediaries have continued to play a vital role in joining the dots between lender supply and consumer demand. In particular, first-time buyers have benefited from widely available and competitively priced deals, even before the extra confidence boost of the stamp duty exemption announced in the Autumn Budget," said Kate Davies, IMLA executive director.

Bank of mum and dad helps young get on ladder

Parents are loaning an average of £24,347 to help their children get on the property ladder in the UK and for those who gift the money it is £32,101, according to new research.

Overall some 16 per cent, one in six, of first-time buyers, amounting to 2.2 million, are funding their home purchase with a parental loan yet 87 per cent of them have no property agreement in place, according to the report from Post Office Money.

Indeed, the majority of parents do not formalise an agreement with their house-buying children and are failing to provide a deed of gift or letter of intent which could put them at risk legally.

Only one in five buyers agree a monthly repayment plan with parents. Those who do pay back £500 a month for an average of four years but 23 per cent will need to renegotiate due to a change in their circumstances, the research also found.

Parents on the whole are very keen to help their children realise their property dreams with 83 per cent wanting to do so. Some 38 per cent do so on the understanding it will be a loan. They say this is to protect their own finances and also to be able to help more than one of their offspring.

However, young people are often hesitant about borrowing money with 82 per cent saying this is how they fell out and 20 per cent saying this is because



they want to maintain a good relationship with their parents. Some 29 per cent agree a verbal agreement over a loan but 19 per cent confessed to not even discussing the terms of the loan from their parents.

Only 16 per cent consult a third party, such as a solicitor and the vast majority of parents are neglecting to put a letter of intent or deed of gift in place to formalise their financial support.

Without this, both parents and buyers are left legally vulnerable and could even be pursued for additional costs such as stamp duty, says Post Office Money.

For those that do sit down to discuss the terms of their loan, many factors are commonly considered

to help ensure repayment is fair including household income, the potential for their income to grow over time and their cost of living.

Just 21 per cent agree a regular repayment plan with parents showing a great deal of trust in their children to pay them back 'at some point', the survey found. However, only four per cent of young buyers who borrow will miss a payment but much more often families will have to renegotiate, due to a change in circumstances.

"The level of support that the UK's parents want to provide their children is truly heartwarming. High house prices and a challenging cost of living has meant that families have had to increasingly live out of each other's pockets to make the most of their combined financial capability," said Owen Woodley, managing director of Post Office Money.

"Indeed, 46 per cent of young people who receive money from their parents anticipate that they will support them financially later in life. Despite this, it's important for everyone to be clear about the nature of their agreement so that everyone's expectations are aligned," he added.

The Money Charity has worked with Post Office to create a new guide to help parents and adult children navigate what may be a pretty heavy, but very important conversation.

Challenges over Shropdoc and cost of drugs sees NHS in county fall further into the red

THE NHS budget in Shropshire is slipping a further £4.6 million into the red, it has been revealed.

Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group had been expecting to end the financial year with a deficit of £19.4m.

But it is now forecasting the figure will reach £24m.

Health bosses said a huge rise in the price of drugs and challenges within the out-of-hours GP service Shropdoc are among the reasons behind the escalating deficit.

Claire Skidmore, Shropshire CCG's chief finance officer and deputy accountable officer, revealed the news at a meeting of the CCG governance board in Shrewsbury last week.

A report to the board said the predicted defi-

Report by Lisa O'Brien

cit reflected "the gap between the CCG's current plan and the excess of expenditure over resource allocation".

Ms Skidmore said the cost of inflation on drug prices had been £2.1m.

Contract

Shropdoc has cost the CCG an extra £750,000 above the cost of the contract.

The board was told it is also becoming increasingly difficult to find ways to make savings in the future.

Future savings are expected to come through changing how health services operate.

Ms Skidmore said: "The big areas we will make a difference is where we are doing transformational change, such as the out of hospital transformation programme."

She said the CCG also hoped to use money in its reserves, amounting to about £2m, to help bring the total deficit down.

The CCG had been expected to sign off on its finance plan and budget for 2018/19 at the meeting.

But a report to the board said it was "not yet possible due to a number of outstanding issues that might materially impact on the CCG's ability to deliver its plan".

A further report is due to be brought to the next CCG meeting "once the final position is clearer".

The deficit at the end of 2017/18 will be added to the £32.6m deficit which has been accumulated over previous years.

Health campaigners say the news reflects a need for MPs to lobby the government to get more funding for the NHS.

Starved

Gill George, chairwoman of Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Defend Our NHS, said: "The only possible conclusion here is that the NHS is being starved of the money it needs to survive. "This is the discussion that has to take place in public, not just at NHS board meetings. "

"It is desperately urgent that our MPs take a view on this and fight for the money our NHS needs."

Innovation Park proposal is showcased to investors

Report by James Pugh

LANDMARK sites earmarked for future development in Shropshire, including Oswestry's Innovation Park, have been showcased to potential European investors.

Others sites include Shrewsbury's Flaxmill Maltings, the former Ironbridge Power Station, 200 acres of development-ready land in Telford and Clive Barracks at Tern Hill.

They are recognised as key investment sites planned for development to create homes and jobs across the region.

A delegation travelled to the international MIPIM property exhibition in the French resort of Cannes in a bid to bring millions of pounds of investment into Shropshire.

A promotional film showcasing the development opportunities and the county's outstanding natural environment has been developed.

Shropshire Council said it has a vision of giving historic buildings and estates a range of modern uses, creating inspiring places to live, work and invest.

It is hoped Oswestry's proposed Innovation Park will attract leading firms and create hundreds of jobs.

The site is being developed just off the Mile End roundabout on the edge of Oswestry.

Plans are being put in place to improve the roundabout to allow the Innovation Park development to progress.

Nic Laurens, Shropshire Council's cabinet member for economic growth, said: "I'm excited that we've finally shown the world that we have fantastic investment opportunities in our county, which also happens to be one of the most attractive locations in the UK to live, work and invest.

"Our presentation was incredibly well received, and alongside the many meetings we have had with developers over the week, we are confident we have done our job and truly put Shropshire on the map, and on the world stage."

The Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) was part of the Midlands UK delegation which attended the event. LEP chairman Graham Wynn OBE joined Midlands Engine chairman Sir John Peace, other LEP and local authority leaders at the event.

Selling the region as one of the best places in the UK to invest, the Marches LEP has worked with partners at the local authorities to develop a proposition for investors.

Mike does running commentary on his operation



Mike and his trusty iPad on Powys Ward after his operation with staff nurse Mandy Reeves and healthcare assistant Julie Beardmore

PEOPLE turn to social media these days to share all manner of details about their lives.

But Mike Hamlyn went a step further than most when he took to Twitter to share live tweets during his hip replacement operation at Oswestry Orthopaedic Hospital.

The 55-year-old from Whitchurch opted for a spinal anaesthesia rather than the traditional general anaesthetic for his procedure following discussions with his anaesthetist Dr Ruth Longfellow.

It was combined with a mild sedative that helped him relax but allowed him to remain conscious throughout the surgery.

He said: "I had my headphones on listening

to a podcast to block out some of the noise and then started sending Twitter updates off my iPad and replying to messages that were coming in.

"I could smell burning from the drilling but I couldn't feel anything, so I was dissociated from it. Talking to people on Twitter was a distraction too. I was glad I did it."

A spinal anaesthesia numbs the nerves from the waist down to the toes for two to three hours and allows an earlier start to post-surgical rehabilitation.

Mr Hamlyn, who is currently training to be a physics teacher through a PGCE at Keele University, said: "The whole operation only took

around 45 minutes and before I knew it I was sat up in recovery having a cup of coffee.

"The night after was the first time I've slept through the night in six months because of the pain I've been in and when I got up the following morning I could walk. It is still a little sore but four days after the operation, I was able to walk into town for my morning coffee."

Dr Longfellow, clinical lead for acute pain at the hospital, said: "We use spinal anaesthesia for the majority of our hip and knee replacements here. Patients are invited to attend a Joint School before their surgery, where they have the opportunity to learn more about types of anaesthesia, particularly spinals."

Police make plea as thieves target cars in break-ins

POLICE are appealing for witnesses to come forward after thefts from cars in Oswestry were reported to officers.

On the night of March 7 a car in Albert Road was broken into.

Items including sunglasses were taken in the incident police have said.

In a separate incident, cash, two digital cameras and a card wallet were stolen from a vehicle in Queens Court, off Queens Road, Oswestry, overnight on March 10.

One of the cards was used fraudulently in

Castle Street in the town at 6.38am on March 11, officers have revealed.

The card was used by a male described as clean-shaven, carrying a rucksack and accompanied by a female with blonde hair.

Contact

Police say anyone who knows about the incidents should contact them on telephone number 101.

Meanwhile, vandals have returned to Welshpool as Dyfed-Powys Police have confirmed

they are investigating two more incidents of smashed windows.

The windows were damaged at around 8.15pm on Monday evening last week.

It happened to two downstairs windows in the Bryn-y-Castell area of the town.

Anyone with information, should contact Welshpool police on (01267) 222020 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

The latest incidents comes after a number of businesses were hit by incidents of vandalism in the town.

The centre of Welshpool suffered a series of vandal attacks over a two-week period.

The incidents prompted a call for police to do more to protect businesses.

The former Rowland's Chemist, which is being converted into a clothes shop was targeted following an incident, and Halls and Great Escape beauty salon and gym also had smashed windows. Police said £300 worth of equipment was stolen from Lads and Dads hairdressers, and BJ Electrical was also struck with broken windows.

Young school footballers play in Vegas

DURING the recent February half term members of Oswestry School's 1st and 2nd football XI travelled to Las Vegas to compete in the Las Vegas Mayors Cup.

The team competed in the competition 12 months ago and exited in truly British style by losing on penalties in the semi-finals. The squad were determined to banish the ghosts of 2017 and they headed into the tournament with confidence on the back of impressive performances in the Shropshire league. A below-par performance led to a 3-0 defeat by the Las Vegas Soccer Academy. In the second game, the boys rallied and put in a much improved performance and despite missing two penalties, thanks to a superb solo run and finish by Fergus Yang, the team held on to beat Compton Futbol Legacy 1-0.

Everything was thrown at Twinstars Academy but the game finished 3-2 with goals from Leroy Celotto and Ugo Ekwueme.

Defeat and exit from the tournament was hard to take, but the tour moved onto California. The boys played one more friendly game against the Orange County Slammers who were managed by the ex-Argentinian international Luis Balboa. Four games in two days had begun to take its toll and despite a valiant effort Oswestry School finished second.

Colour run will be staged at ironworks

A COLOUR run will be held at the British Ironwork Centre near Oswestry later this year in aid of charity.

The Oswestry Colour Run, the first of its kind in the area, is being held at the centre just off the A5 on July 1.

The event is being held in conjunction with Girlguiding Shropshire, organisers have said.

Money raised from the event will go towards the work of Macmillan Cancer Support.

The Colour Run is a 3K run, walk or jog around the ironwork's grounds with paint throwing stations around the course.

There is an opportunity for companies to get involved with this event and sponsorship of the paint stations is available at a cost of £500 per station.

The sponsor would be included in the marketing and promotional activity for the event.

The paint station could be colour coded to tie in with corporate branding and banners can be displayed at the station on the day.

For more information, contact Kate Thomas, Shropshire fundraising manager, Macmillan Cancer Support on email kthomas@macmillan.org.uk or telephone 07894 936358.

Care provider has jobs available

PEOPLE looking for a job can go along to a recruitment event at a care provider.

Abacare is hosting a recruitment drop-in session at Welshpool Job Centre at New Dolanog House on Severn Road on Tuesday next week from 11am where people can hear from staff about the different opportunities available.

Beth Howells, recruitment administrator at Abacare, said: "Our recruitment drop-in session is a great opportunity for any job seekers to find out more about working in the care industry from people who have first-hand experience."

For more information about Abacare call (01686) 625644.

Teddy bears' picnic helps out hospice

FOOTSTEPS Nursery based at North Shropshire College's Oswestry Campus recently organised a teddy bears' picnic in aid of Hope House Children's Hospice.

The children brought their favourite bear with them to the nursery on the day, along with a donation to the charity. A total of £37 was raised.

28 Vulnerable in village are the target of yobs

Oswestry & Border Chronicle Thursday, March 22, 2018

YOUTHS have been targeting vulnerable people in a village, throwing stones and snowballs at houses and shouting through letter boxes.

The problems in Whittington near Oswestry have led to police urging members of the community to be good neighbours and report any worries.

Officers say that they want to nip the anti-social behaviour in the bud.

Police Community Support Officer Dave Hughes said many of the young people involved had come from outside the area.

He said there had also been reports of some of the vulnerable members of the community being pressured into buying drink and cigarettes for those under age. "We don't want to stop young people from meeting up and having a good time but we are concerned that anti-social behaviour is escalating in the village," he said. "There have been reports of stones and snowballs thrown at windows and at cars for instance.

"If people are worried about themselves or a neighbour, they can talk to us in complete confidence. We can give advice on CCTV which can act as a deterrent and is no longer expensive.

"We would rather people contact us, by ringing police on 101, as soon as they are concerned and then we can respond as quickly as possible."

Centre in town is to undergo a makeover

A LEISURE centre in north Powys is set to undergo a makeover.

Following complaints regarding the state of the gym at Llanfyllin Leisure Centre, Freedom Leisure, which runs the branch and a host of others around Powys, has pledged to make improvements.

Speaking to the town council, officials from the organisation revealed work will begin later this year or in early 2019.

Work will include installing new gym equipment, upgrades to flooring and repairs to lighting and the changing rooms.

In the past year, the organisation revealed that it had spent £15,000 on upgrades to some facilities at the centre and further works will take place.

Bosses admitted Llanfyllin had one of the poorest gyms of the centres they run across the county, along with Knighton, Presteigne and Builth Wells.

They admitted they are aware of concerns and councillors said they had received complaints about the standards at the centre.

Councillors said that residents were concerned that if the situation gets worse, it could close. However Glyn Owen of Freedom Leisure assured councillors the organisation was committed to investing in the future of the centre for 15 years.

Performance by group is signed

AN amateur dramatic company will have a performance of its latest production signed for those with hearing difficulties.

The performance will be a first for the Guilsfield Amateur Dramatic Society.

It is presenting two comedies, "The Boundary" by Tom Stoppard and Clive Exton and "Plaster" by Richard Harris in the village tomorrow (Friday) and Saturday.

Both will begin at 7.30pm with the Saturday performance signed in BSI.

The society chairman Sue Jones, said: "We are very excited about this new opportunity to bring in people who are not usually able to attend.

"If it proves popular we hope to have more signed plays, so please let us know what you think."

Both plays are about couples who have been married for years suddenly finding themselves in unexpected situations, but with very different outcomes.

After the performances in Guilsfield the plays will go onto the Montgomeryshire Community Drama Festival in Berriew from April 4-7.

Tickets for the plays can be purchased from Welshpool Jewellers, Costcutter Guilsfield and on line at www.guilsfieldarts.net.

Figures show how many parents have been fined over their children's absence

Report by Mat Growcott

child out of school on a holiday. Locally we take a firm and consistent approach to this and this is part of a proactive approach taken by both schools and the council to continually improve school attendance.

Result

"As a result, Telford and Wrekin's overall attendance has improved and is now at least in line with national averages and we have a significant number of schools whose attendance is above national average.

"It is our belief that children need to attend school in order to achieve their best potential."

Shropshire Council said it was encouraging that there had been a reduction in the number of requests for holidays in term time.

Christine Kerry, Shropshire Council's education access service manager, said: "Shropshire schools and Shropshire Council continue to work in line with Government policy and adhere to current legislation regarding leave of absence during term time.

"The attendance of pupils in Shropshire is recognised as being consistently high and this is due to parents, carers, schools and the council working together to ensure all pupils are able to access the education to which they are entitled.

"Following work undertaken by Shropshire Council and schools over a number of years to

raise awareness of how children are disadvantaged by unnecessary absence from school, the majority of parents and carers do recognise this and support the DfE policy by ensuring their children attend school on a regular basis.

"It is encouraging that over time, there has been a significant reduction in the number of requests for holidays in term time and consequently fewer penalty notices issued."

Parents across England and Wales were fined £24 million across that year.

Between them, 155 local authorities in England and Wales issued about 400,000 penalties over three years. On average, 12 penalties were issued per 1,000 children – whether for truancy or for parents taking children away on holiday during term time.

Report by Jordan Reynolds

GRANTS for parish and local councils to maintain their environment could be cut by more than £75,000 by Shropshire Council.

The authority's cabinet will consider recommendations put forward by members of a review panel which state that annual funding for the grants should be cut from £152,000 to £75,000.

The grants are handed to rural parish councils and town councils with a population under 10,000. There is one community group using a grant to enable residents to carry out litter picks.

The top five services completed with the grant funding this financial year include mowing/stripping grass in amenity spaces, clearing leaves/debris from grids, straightening and cleaning road signs, litter picking and controlling weeds.

For the last two financial years, the total of the grants handed out was £152,000, while the budget was £110,000, but the group is recommending that this value be cut to £75,000.

Value

This financial year 96 local councils made an application and received funding. The total value of the applications was £200,843, and was oversubscribed by £48,843.

The review panel looked at responses from questionnaires which were sent to all town and parish councils.

Among the responses it was stated that the work completed as a result of the grants is of a higher standard than highways contractor work, it enables councils to be more responsive to local issues, the work is delivered by local people with local knowledge, and some local councils are already match funding the grant.

The review panel recommended that the maximum value of individual grants should be £1,500 per year, a reduction from £3,000, and that funding decisions should be made for a three year period. The report from the panel says: "Reducing the maximum funding figure will help to manage the pressure on the significantly reduced total budget that is being recommended, but managing the demand on the budget will have to be done in other ways.

"It is recommended that this is done through a streamlining of the eligible activity."

Shropshire Council's cabinet was due to consider the recommendation at a meeting yesterday (Wednesday).

'Mini Beast from the East' brings cold blast



The Perry family in Whittington near Oswestry enjoyed the snow at the weekend which left many residents shivering

EMERGENCY services were called out to crashes on the roads and scores of events were cancelled as winter returned to the region at the weekend.

The 'mini Beast from the East' brought nothing like the snow that fell in February but there was enough to play havoc with transport and sporting fixtures.

Several hundred runners were left disappointed when the Mercedes Benz Shrewsbury 10k was cancelled just hours before it was due to get under way in the town centre. Race organisers said the decision had been taken for

the safety of competitors. Parts of the course had been affected and roads leading to the town had been hit by the snow and ice.

Emergency services dealt with several accidents on roads in Shropshire as snow fell.

The M54 was closed for a while between Telford and Ketley to allow workmen to remove dangerous icicles hanging from a sign.

A country road on the Shropshire and Mid Wales border was closed to lorries for much of Sunday. Police said power lines down on B4393 between Four Crosses and Llansantffraid made the road impassable to high sided vehicles.

More than 30 schools across Mid Wales were closed on Monday.

Snow, ice and heating breakdowns were among the problems that led to decisions by secondary and primary school head teachers to keep the school gates closed.

Welshpool, Newtown and Llanfyllin High Schools remained shut as did secondary schools in Llanfair Caereinion, Llanidloes and others further south.

There were 28 primary schools closed across the region, both in town and in villages and more rural communities.

Piano Week ready to hit the right note again at school

INTERNATIONAL festival and summer school Piano Week will have its inaugural Easter edition at Moreton Hall School near Oswestry next week.

The music extravaganza runs from Sunday until April 1.

Following on from the success of the ever popular summer residencies held at the school in 2016 and 2017, the festival directors are thrilled to announce that the seven-strong faculty of international concert pianists and pedagogues will be giving daily evening recitals at

the school's Musgrave Theatre at 7pm. Tickets for all performances will soon be available for purchase directly on the festival's website at pianoweek.com/concerts and people will also have a chance to gain last-minute admission on the door.

An impressive list of performers includes both festival directors Samantha Ward (UK) and Maciej Raginia (Poland) as well as many other award-winning concert pianists and pedagogues: Roberto Russo (Italy), Sam Armstrong (UK), Mark Nixon (South Africa), Madalina

Rusu (Romania) and Alexander Karpeyev (Russia).

For those who have not yet heard of Piano Week since its arrival in Shropshire two years ago, this is a chance to experience classical music of the highest calibre right on their doorstep.

With eight residencies in the UK, Italy, Germany, China and Thailand in 2018, this UK-born touring classical music enterprise is en route to become one of the major household names amongst piano festivals in the country

and overseas. Since its launch in 2013, Piano Week has welcomed numerous eminent names such as Stephen Kovacevich, Leon McCawley, Chenyin Li and David Fung as its guest artists.

The course part of Piano Week, which runs simultaneously to the festival, is open to participants of any age and ability and forms an intensive programme of master classes, performances and one-to-one lessons, offering pianists an opportunity to study with a distinguished international faculty of concert artists, pedagogues and educators.

Authority to look at getting more women into politics

PRACTICAL ways to encourage women to run for roles in politics are to be considered by Powys County Council.

Members of the authority debated a motion proposed by Councillor Liam Fitzpatrick calling on the council to recognise the contribution women have made to politics and to encourage more to get involved.

The discussion took place to mark International Women's Day.

Councillor Fitzpatrick said his daughter is currently at Birmingham University where

she is leading the #Metoo protest and he said his wife is the current chairman of the Labour Party in Brecon.

He spoke about the current times when women receive death threats via social media and MP Jo Cox was murdered on the street. He named many women currently leading in politics such as Prime Minister Theresa May, Brecon and Radnorshire Assembly Member Kirsty Williams and Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon.

"Women are everywhere in politics and they

deserve to be in politics," he said. He paid homage to the new women councillors who joined the authority in May and he said they are respected by their communities, and also to the female councillors who have been on the council for many years.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Amanda Jenner, who declared she is a feminist, even though it is considered by some to be a 'dirty word'.

"Feminism is still needed. It's not a dirty word, it does not mean that you hate men. Al-

though we have made good progress we still do not have 50/50 representation. Yes we have female leadership, but until we have 50/50 representation, there are issues we can't address such as the equality pay gap and female genital mutilation and we need to make sure these things are on the table," said Councillor Jenner.

Members agreed to ask the council's democratic services committee to look at practical ways to encourage women to take a role in civic life.

Home joy for ex-actor Mark



Mark Venables with some of his acting and Dr Who memorabilia

MARK Venables feared he could spend the whole winter in a tent unable to find anywhere to live when he moved to Shropshire to be near his sons.

But Shropshire Housing Alliance stepped in to offer him a studio flat in an historic mill near Oswestry.

Mr Venables, a former actor, says he can't thank the housing alliance enough for taking him off the streets.

The 47-year-old said he moved to Oswestry in August to be close to his sons, aged seven and 20.

But he said things didn't go according to plan and he found himself homeless. "I was living in a tent," he said. "Thankfully I registered with SHA and in December, before all the freezing weather, they found me this wonderful studio flat which is at the top of the former mill."

"The flat is immaculate and having a home means that I can now have my youngest son come to visit and stay with me. I can't thank SHA enough for everything they have done for me."

The Grade II listed Morda Mill dates

back to the early 19th century and Mr Venables said he enjoys living in the historical building.

He said: "I have a lot of Doctor Who memorabilia, as well as items from my acting days, and they look great in this property which has its own theatrical touches."

Mr Venables, who volunteers for the Chalk charity in Oswestry, said his acting even led to a part in Doctor Who. "When my agent called me up to say that they wanted to audition me for a part in the show I jumped at the chance," he said.

"In the audition I had to act terrified – and they obviously liked my facial expressions because I got the job."

"At the time the Dr Who was David Tennant and the episode was about a hospital being transported to the moon. In my scene I'm in the hospital with other people, running scared from a group of aliens."

"I enjoyed my acting jobs and as well as a number of pantos and stage shows I got to perform on The Charlotte Church Show, and also worked alongside actress Anne Reid who stars in Last Tango in Halifax."

Councillor roles could be cut down in future

THE number of councillors on Powys County Council could be cut from 73 to 68.

In 2016, the Welsh Government wrote to the Boundary Commission for Wales asking to restart its 10-year programme to review election boundaries.

The hope is to have new boundaries in place for the 2022 local government elections.

Changes to Powys County Council would see councillor numbers cut by five.

A report to the local authority's full council meeting outlined how the 68 elected members would represent 60 divisions.

Changes

Ward changes would see Llanidloes join with Llangurig and Blaen Hafren, and Kerry join with Llandinam to make one ward.

Newtown central and south seats would combine to make one, as would Caersws and Llanbrynmair, and Forden and Montgomery.

Trelystan, which is currently part of Forden, would be part of the Trewern ward, however Welshpool would remain with three wards.

Currently there are three councillors representing Castle, Gungrog and Llanerchydol wards in Welshpool.

Representations have been made from the town council to change the boundaries, but stick with having three wards with a councillor for each ward.

Under other plans, Castle Caereinion, which is currently part of Guilsfield, would become part of a new ward with Berriew, and Llanfair Caereinion would join with Llanerfyl.

The commission has also proposed a number of

Report by Jonny Drury

other changes, that would result in the number of members being cut to 68.

The report to the council proposed that group leaders were delegated with the authority to consider and provide a response.

The council noted the report and will consider its response.

The county council boundary changes come after parliamentary boundary proposals were put forward to reduce the number of MPs from 650 to 600.

Changes in Powys would potentially see the Montgomeryshire seat sliced into three, with part of it being coupled with Clwyd South, part being put with Ceredigion, and another area becoming part of Brecon and Radnorshire.

Montgomeryshire MP Mr Davies said he would be greatly saddened by the loss of his seat, which he said would be bad for democracy in the area.

The proposed changes would also have an effect on Shropshire.

The Ludlow seat, held by Philip Dunne since 2005, could merge with the northern part of Bill Wiggan's North Herefordshire seat to create a new Ludlow & Leominster constituency. The Boundary Commission's report said while this would be a geographically large constituency, there two towns benefited from strong road links.

Bridgnorth, Much Wenlock and Broseley will no longer come under Ludlow, but will be moved into a new seat for Bridgnorth, Wellington and The Wrekin. Chirbury and Worthen, which at the moment come under Ludlow, could become part of a renamed Shrewsbury constituency, which will drop its reference to the village of Atcham.

Residents urged to turn off in support of annual Earth Hour

BOSSES at Powys County Council are showing support once again for this year's Earth Hour—the annual, global celebration of the planet.

On Saturday at 8.30pm, people across the world will be switching off their lights to support WWF's Earth Hour 2018.

Bosses at Powys County Council are taking part in the environmentally friendly move and are encouraging others to join in with the initiative.

Councillor Aled Davies, deputy leader and cabinet member for sustainability, said: "The council will unite with millions of people, cities, communities and landmarks around the globe in a global visual display of commitment to tackle urgent environmental issues and protect our planet."

"Taking part in the world's largest environmental campaign is just one way of demonstrating our support."

"We encourage local communities and partners in Powys to make a #PromiseForThePlanet and join the global lights out event for Earth Hour on Saturday at 8.30pm but even more importantly we need to be conscious of those personal actions we take every day and the environmental impact that they have."

For more information and to make a promise to support the initiative people can visit wfwf.org.uk/earthhourwales

Wife's thanks to life-saving staff at gym

THE wife of a man whose life was saved after he had a cardiac arrest in a gym has thanked staff for their quick actions.

The couple, who have asked not to be named, were exercising in the gym at The Venue at Park Hall near Oswestry when the husband collapsed.

In a letter to The Venue, the home of Welsh champions The New Saints, the wife says staff saved his life using a defibrillator.

"Chris Sergeant was first there to help and Naomi the gym instructor put my husband into recovery and checking for a pulse," she wrote.

"I was then taken away from the scene as the TNS physiotherapists arrived. Everyone was amazing in handling the whole, awful situation. They acted with professionalism and superb skills, keeping calm and methodical as they went through the processes."

"I am in no doubt that they saved my husband's life. They then continued to support the paramedics and ambulance service until the helicopter arrived."

"I really can't praise or thank them enough, they did your club proud and deserve an accolade."

"My husband is now on the road to recovery after spending eight days in Stoke University Hospital, in critical care."

Charity gives £240,000 to boost health

A SHROPSHIRE-based charity has pledged £240,100 to fund a programme helping cancer sufferers for the next three years.

The Lingen Davies Cancer Fund, which raises money to improve cancer facilities in Shropshire, Telford and Mid Wales, has given the funding to Shropshire Council's Get Active, Feel Good programme.

The scheme, delivered by Lifestyle Fitness Ltd on behalf of Shropshire Council's public health, supports people with cancer to feel better through increasing their levels of physical activity and moving around more.

Naomi Atkin, Lingen Davies' executive officer, said: "We are excited to be involved with this project. "Physical activity is shown to have a really significant impact on patient's physical and mental health both during and after treatment, and can support better outcomes of treatment."

Shropshire Council's Get Active Feel Good programme has been operating since 2012.

With current funding coming to an end, Lingen Davies has agreed to support the continuation of the project, which will now be expanded to operate in community venues across the region, as well as its current bases at Shrewsbury and Telford hospitals.

Lee Chapman, Shropshire Council's cabinet member for health, adult social care and housing, said: "We are absolutely delighted that we can continue to deliver the Get Active Feel Good programme."

For more information visit www.lingen-davies.co.uk/getactivefeelgood

Arts group to host workshops

COMMUNITY arts organisation Arts Connection is holding a number of workshops over the next few weeks aimed at families, young people and older people.

Arts Connection and Night Out are hosting a night of shadow theatre and storytelling by Tell-a-Vision at Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant Public Hall at 7.30pm tomorrow (Friday).

Ages of eight plus are welcome and tickets are £5 and £3.

Bookings can be made at artsconnection.org.uk/tellavisionnightout/

On Tuesday next week an Easter holiday Splash of Spring Colour family art workshop will be at Llanfyllin Youth & Community Centre from 1pm to 4pm.

All children should be accompanied and bookings can be made at artsconnection.org.uk/springarts cost £3 per family.

A further circus skills workshop will take place between 10am and 12.30pm on 1.30pm and 4pm, with a venue yet to be announced.

Sainsbury's store workers set for pay boost

HUNDREDS of Shropshire supermarket workers are set for a pay boost after Sainsbury's revealed plans to increase its basic rate of pay by £1.20 an hour to £9.20, well above the national living wage.

The company said it would be investing £100 million in its employees this year, adding that the pay rise would be funded by cost savings.

A new contract is being introduced for all 130,000 staff, which the company said would ensure consistency and fairness across all its stores, regardless of age or length of service. Most of the staff work in the company's 1,400 supermarkets including its superstore at Telford, three outlets in Shrewsbury and other

branches in Oswestry, Welshpool, Whitchurch and Market Drayton.

The number of roles within stores will be cut from 22 to five – trading assistant, food services assistant, online assistant, general merchandise and clothing assistant, and services assistant. A bonus usually paid in the spring will end, as will paid breaks.

Sainsbury's said a small number of staff may be adversely affected, adding that top-up payments will be made for 18 months to ensure no-one earns less than they do today.

Consultations with staff have started and the new pay rate is planned to start in September.

Joanne McGuinness, national officer of the shopworkers'

union Usdaw, said: "Udaw has long been making the case for the real living wage and beyond, so this deal takes Sainsbury's staff 45p per hour above that £8.75 rate. While this is welcome news for Usdaw members working in Sainsbury's, we will be looking closely at the whole deal, as we understand there are some contractual changes."

But Unite, with 12,000 members at Sainsbury's, called it 'a robbing Peter to pay Paul' pay offer, saying the increase would be eroded by strings such as removing premium pay for Sunday working.

Unite will hold a consultative ballot of members across the UK from the end of March, recommending they reject the offer.



Casualt
8.20pm
The day of Robyn and Glen's wedding arrives, but the groom has a seizure while getting ready at the hotel. Rash treats a woman suffering from anxiety after the death of her fiancé.



David Attenborough's Natural Curiosities
8pm
The evolutionary documentary concludes, as David Attenborough profiles the Siamese fighting fish and the kangaroo.



The Voice UK
8.30pm
Emma Willis presents the second of the knockout shows as the remaining acts sing for a place in next week's semi-final. Tom Jones is helped out by Australian pop queen Kylie Minogue.



Coastal Railways with Julie Walters
7pm
The actress travels around the UK coast by train, beginning by boarding the famous Jacobite steam train for a trip along Scotland's West Highland Railway.



Cruising with Jane McDonald
7pm
The presenter cruises around Cuba aboard the Celestyal Crystal, starting and ending in Havana, sampling the relatively new tourist industry of the Caribbean island.

BBC1

- 6.00 Breakfast.**
10.00 Saturday Kitchen Live. Host Andi Oliver is joined by Strictly Come Dancing stalwart Anton Du Beke, who faces his food heaven or hell. Plus, chefs Tom Kitchin and Ben Tish prepare dishes in the studio.
11.30 Classic Mary Berry. The food writer demonstrates a range of recipes for entertaining guests, including beetroot gravadlax, sticky chicken, crispy roast duck and raspberry mousse.
12.00 Football Focus. Dan Walker and guests review the week's headlines and look ahead to forthcoming fixtures, as the domestic calendar takes a back seat and international matches dominate the schedule.
12.30 BBC News: Weather.
12.45 FILM: The Pirates! In an Adventure with Scientists! (2012). A bungling buccaneer tries to win the coveted Pirate of the Year award, with the aid of Charles Darwin. Animated comedy, with the voices of Hugh Grant and Martin Freeman.
2.05 Gymnastics: World Cup Highlights. Action from the Gymnastics World Cup, which took place at Arena Birmingham. Great Britain's team included Nile Wilson and James Hall.
3.50 The Boat Race. Clare Balding presents live coverage of the men's and women's University Boat Races on the River Thames, as Oxford aim to retain the men's title, and Cambridge the women's.
6.15 Doodlebugs. Sketch show in which inanimate objects share their thoughts on the world. With the voices of Kayvan Novak, Cardinal Burns, Morgana Robinson and Spencer Jones.
6.30 BBC News.
6.40 Midlands Today; Weather.
6.45 Pointless Celebrities. A special Grange Hill version of the quiz, featuring Todd Carty, Alison Bettles, Paula Ann Bland, Lee MacDonald, Erkan Mustafa, Michelle Gayle, Francesca Martinez and Stuart Organ.
7.40 Who Dares Wins. New series. Nick Knowles hosts the game show in which two pairs of complete strangers team up, each battling to outdo the other by listing as much as they know about given subjects.
8.20 Casualty. The day of Robyn and Glen's wedding arrives, but the groom has a seizure while getting ready at the hotel. Rash treats a woman suffering from anxiety after the death of her fiancé.
9.10 Troy: Fall of a City. The Trojans receive a message from the gods and embark on a daring raid with their newfound allies. Achilles is provoked into returning to battle Hector.
10.10 BBC News; Weather; National Lottery Update.
10.30 FILM: Guardians of the Galaxy (2014). A band of escapees from a prison space station battles an alien warlord for possession of a powerful artefact. Sci-fi adventure, starring Chris Pratt and Zoe Saldana.
12.25 Weather for the Week Ahead.
12.30 BBC News.

BBC2

- 6.10 The Wonder of Animals.** (R)
6.40 Naomi's Nightmares of Nature. (R)
7.10 The Pets Factor.
7.30 The Engineers.
8.00 Absolute Genius: Monster Builds.
8.30 Beyond Bionic.
9.00 Robot Wars. Dara O Brain and Angela Scanlon present the next stage of the contest. (R)
10.00 Gordon Buchanan: Elephant Family & Me. (R)
11.00 Famously Unfit for Sport Relief. (R)
12.00 Homes Under the Hammer. Properties in Devon, Staffordshire and Derbyshire. (R)
12.45 Escape to the Country. A couple from London hope to make their first joint property purchase in Cornwall. (R)
1.30 Planet Earth. Creatures inhabiting the deep oceans of the world. Last in the series. (R)
2.30 Me and My Dog: The Ultimate Contest. Dog owners and their pets compete in the final stage of the contest. Last in the series. (R)
3.30 The Repair Shop. The team restores a rosewood table, a panda bear and a toy steamboat. (R)
4.00 The Secret Helpers. Ten people welcome the support and advice of strangers through a secret in-ear device. (R)
5.00 Big Cats About the House. Following the work of big cat expert Giles Clark. (R)
6.00 Hugh's Wild West. Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall celebrates volunteers who help wildlife in the West Country, meeting a woman who has transformed her home into a hedgehog hospital. Last in the series.
7.00 Amazing Hotels: Life Beyond the Lobby. Giles Coren and Monica Galetti work in Ireland's Ashford Castle, dating back to 1228. Despite its rollercoaster ride through the ages Ashford has sustained strong community ties. (R)
8.00 David Attenborough's Natural Curiosities. The evolutionary documentary concludes, as David Attenborough profiles the Siamese fighting fish and the kangaroo, which has a kick so strong it can kill. Last in the series.
8.30 Dad's Army. The platoon takes part in an efficiency test in a bid to prove its worth, but mistakenly attacks a tea lady with onions from Jones's van. Guest starring Fulton Mackay. (R)
9.00 Picasso's Last Stand. Documentary telling the story of the last decade of the great artist's life, through the memories of family, close friends and the people he allowed into his world in the 1960s.
10.00 FILM: A Late Quartet (2012). A member of a string quartet announces his retirement, bringing up personal conflicts among the other musicians. Drama, with Christopher Walken and Philip Seymour Hoffman.
11.40 FILM: Safe Haven (2013). A woman trying to make a fresh start in a coastal town realises she must confront the dark past she is running from. Romantic drama, with Julianne Hough and Josh Duhamel.
2.30 (BST) Civilisations. (R)
3.30 This is BBC2.

ITV

- 6.00 CITV: Sooty** **6.10 Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids** **6.20 Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids** **6.35 Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures** **6.50 Super 4** **7.00 Signed Stories: Share a Story** **7.05 Marvel's Avengers: Ultron Revolution**
7.30 Scrambled!: Scrambled! Two hours of children's fun.
7.35 Scrambled!: The Tom and Jerry Show. Cat and mouse adventures. (R)
7.50 Scrambled!: The Powerpuff Girls. Blossom neglects her promise to Bubbles when she takes on too many things leaving Buttercup and Bubbles to fend for themselves. (R)
8.10 Scrambled!: The Bagel and Becky Show. More animated adventures with the brother and sister duo. (R)
8.30 Scrambled!: Be Cool, Scooby-Doo! Adventures with the Scooby gang. (R)
9.05 Scrambled!: Wishfart. (R)
9.25 ITV News.
9.30 James Martin's Saturday Morning. With guests Sean Wilson and Tony Tobin.
11.20 Who's Doing the Dishes? With former Olympic ice skating champion Jayne Torvill. (R)
12.20 ITV News and Weather; Weather.
12.30 Dancing on Ice – The Final. The three pro-celebrity couples compete to claim the title of Champion of the Rink. Last in the series. (R)
2.30 Britain's Brightest Family. Two families compete in the second of the quarter-finals. (R)
3.00 Celebrity Catchphrase. Chris Kamara, Stacey Solomon and Catherine Tyldesley see it and say it. (R)
4.00 Tipping Point. Game show, hosted by Ben Shephard. (R)
5.00 The Chase. Quiz show, hosted by Bradley Walsh. (R)
6.00 ITV News and Weather.
6.20 ITV News Central; Weather.
6.30 New You've Been Framed! Harry Hill narrates a selection of mishaps filmed by viewers, featuring a woman being attacked by a remote-controlled plane and a man hit by a giant trampoline during a hurricane.
7.00 Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway. Comedian Alan Carr joins the fun as this week's guest announcer, while the Geordie duo go up against cast members from Coronation Street in the return of Make 'Em Laugh.
8.30 The Voice UK. Emma Willis presents the second of the knockout shows as the remaining acts sing for a place in next week's semi-final.
10.30 ITV News and Weather; Weather.
10.45 FILM: Fast & Furious 5 (2011). A fugitive assembles a team of criminals for a heist in Rio, but the FBI's top manhunter is on their trail. Action adventure sequel, starring Vin Diesel and Dwayne Johnson.
2.00 (BST) Jackpot247. Viewers get the chance to participate in live interactive gaming from the comfort of their sofas, with a mix of roulette-wheel spins and lively chat from the presenting team.
4.00 Babushka. Game show hosted by Rylan Clark-Neal in which contestants open a set of giant Russian nesting dolls, with some empty and others containing prizes up to £10,000. (R)
4.50 ITV Nightscreen. Text-based information service.

Channel 4

- 6.15 The King of Queens.** Arthur becomes Doug's neighbour. (R)
6.40 The King of Queens. Carrie keeps cheating at games. (R)
7.05 The King of Queens. Donny Osmond guest stars. (R)
7.30 Mobil 1: The Grid. Daniel Ricciardo and Max Verstappen assess the "halo" safety device.
8.00 Everybody Loves Raymond. Robert is offered a job with the FBI. (R)
8.25 Everybody Loves Raymond. Ray and Debra offend Frank and Marie. (R)
8.55 Frasier. The Crane brothers buy into a restaurant. (R)
9.25 Frasier. Everyone is feeling grumpy on Martin's birthday. (R)
10.00 Frasier. A new manager joins the radio station. (R)
10.30 The Big Bang Theory. Leonard's mother visits. Guest starring Christine Baranski. (R)
11.00 The Big Bang Theory. Sheldon and Penny fall out over a game of paintball. (R)
11.30 The Big Bang Theory. The pals try to start a conversation with a sci-fi star. (R)
12.00 The Simpsons. Homer teaches an adult education course. (R)
12.30 The Simpsons. Grandma Bouvier is swept off her feet by Grampa. (R)
1.00 Formula 1 Australian Grand Prix Qualifying Highlights. Action from the battle for pole position.
2.50 Car SOS. New series. Tim Shaw and mechanic Fuzz Townshend repair an AC Aceca
3.50 Coast vs Country. A mother and daughter search for a family home in the Gower Peninsula. (R)
4.50 A Place in the Sun: Summer Sun. A woman who wants to swap life in London for Spain's Costa Azahar. (R)
5.35 The Secret Life of the Zoo. Documentary about the animals of Chester Zoo. (R)
6.30 Channel 4 News.
7.00 Coastal Railways with Julie Walters. The actress travels around the UK coast by train, beginning by boarding the famous Jacobite steam train for a trip along Scotland's West Highland Railway. (R)
8.00 Britain at Low Tide. Tori Herridge uncovers the story behind a dramatic night in 1976 when a fishing trawler went wildly off course in the North Sea, running aground in Whitby, North Yorkshire.
9.00 FILM: Everest (2015). Premiere. Two expeditions climb the mountain, only to get caught in one of the fiercest snowstorms ever recorded. Fact-based adventure, starring Jason Clarke and Josh Brolin.
11.20 FILM: Predator 2 (1990). A tough cop investigating a series of gruesome murders discovers it is the work of an alien that kills for sport. Sci-fi thriller sequel, starring Danny Glover and Bill Paxton.
2.20 (BST) Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA. An Italian family restaurant in Long Beach, California. (R)
3.10 Holyoaks. Omnibus. Mandy and Luke get ready for their trip to Florida, but his past habits may cause a problem. Meanwhile, Cindy embarks on a new business venture. (R)
5.15 Coast vs Country. Searching for a potential retirement home in Dorset. (R)

Channel 5

- 6.00 Milkshake!: Little Princess** **6.10 Wissper** **6.20 The Mr Men Show** **6.30 Milkshake! Monkey** **6.35 The Secret Life of Puppies** **6.40 Mofy** **6.45 Simon** **6.50 Simon** **6.55 Peppa Pig** **7.05 Paw Patrol** **7.15 Thomas & Friends** **7.25 Fireman Sam** **7.35 Oilly the Little White Van** **7.45 Blaze and the Monster Machines** **8.10 Paw Patrol** **8.30 Nella the Princess Knight** **8.45 Noddy: Toyland Detective** **9.00 Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom** **9.10 Shimmer and Shine** **9.25 Digby Dragon** **9.40 Peppa Pig** **9.50 Peppa Pig**
10.00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. (R)
10.35 The Gadget Show. Jon Bentley asks couples to test out smart tech bathroom scales. (R)
11.30 Police Interceptors. Dog handler Andy Hunt is called to a violent domestic disturbance. (R)
12.30 Police Interceptors. Kev and Steve go on the hunt for suspected heroin dealers. (R)
1.30 Police Interceptors. Justin Moffitt and Paul Faulkner chase down a gang of suspected car thieves. (R)
2.30 Live Aviva Premiership Rugby Union. Saracens v Harlequins (Kick-off 3.00pm).
5.15 Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away. A family with dubious immigration status finds itself homeless. (R)
6.10 Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away. Kevin Stokes and Brian O'Shaughnessy chase a £16,000 debt run up by a coach company and Stewart McCracken and Elmor Victor face a heart-breaking house repossession. (R)
7.00 Cruising with Jane McDonald. Jane cruises around Cuba aboard the Celestyal Crystal, starting and ending in Havana, sampling the relatively new tourist industry of the Caribbean island. (R)
7.55 5 News Weekend.
8.00 Inside Windsor Castle. Documentary marking the centenary of the Windsor dynasty by examining the history of the royal residence over the past 80 years, beginning with the fire of 1992. (R)
9.00 King Tut's Treasure Secrets. New series. Documentary exploring the thousands of items found with the great Egyptian pharaoh when his tomb was first uncovered.
9.55 King Tut's Tomb: The Hidden Chamber. Documentary examining recent discoveries made in the famous burial chamber, which archaeologists now believe may also be the resting place of Queen Nefertiti. (R)
10.50 Secrets of the Valley of the Kings. An exploration of the Valley of the Kings, the royal necropolis of the pharaohs and the world's most famous royal burial ground. (R)
11.50 Football on 5: Goal Rush. Colin Murray introduces all the goals from the weekend's games in Leagues One and Two, including Doncaster Rovers v Blackburn Rovers and Coventry City v Grimsby Town.
12.15 SuperCasino.
3.10 FILM: (BST) Due Date (2010). Comedy, starring Robert Downey Jr.
4.45 House Doctor. (R)
5.10 Great Artists. (R)
5.35 Wildlife SOS. (R)

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Hold the Sunset
7.30pm

Phil (John Cleese) fears he will lose Edith to Bob, and his anxieties are compounded by the possibility that a face from his past may be about to make an unwelcome reappearance.



Top Gear
8pm

Matt LeBlanc test drives the Ferrari 812 Superfast, while Rory Reid travels to the US in search of a muscle car that is illegal in Europe. With guest Vicky McClure (Line of Duty).



Celebrity Catchphrase
7pm

Stephen Mulhern hosts a charity edition of the game show in which Jonathan Ross, Tess Daly and Linda Robson must guess the familiar phrases hidden in animated clues.



Homeland
9pm

Saul calls an old friend, while Wellington has a problem and Carrie enjoys a win. Starring Claire Danes, Mandy Patinkin, Linus Roache, Elizabeth Marvel and Maury Sterling.



Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away
7.15pm

The agents try to recover more than £12,000 owed by a jeweller to one of his suppliers, and chase up more than £5,000 owed by a tenant to her former landlord for rent arrears.

BBC1

- 6.00 **Breakfast.**
9.00 **The Andrew Marr Show.**
10.00 **The Big Questions.** Nicky Campbell presents moral and religious discussions on topical issues, with contributions by members of the studio audience, live from Hutchesons' Grammar School, Glasgow.
11.00 **Sunday Politics West Midlands.** The week's events at Westminster, presented by Sarah Smith. Including a regional round-up.
12.15 **BBC News; Weather.**
12.30 **MasterChef.** Seven more contenders compete in the final week of heats, with their first task being to invent and then cook one dish using ingredients from the MasterChef Market. (R)
1.30 **MasterChef.** The last group of seven amateur cooks are challenged to invent a dish using a choice of ingredients including lamb loin, chicken thighs, scallops, salmon fillets and prawns. (R)
2.30 **MasterChef.** The last quarter-finalists make their own version of a full English breakfast. (R)
3.00 **Money for Nothing.** Experts transform and then sell three things about to be dumped at a tip, before giving the profits to the people who were getting rid of the items. (R)
4.00 **Escape to the Country.** A woman searches for a home in rural Devon. (R)
4.30 **Songs of Praise.** Sean Fletcher presents the show from St Albans Cathedral.
5.05 **Sport Relief 2018: The Best Bits.** The most memorable moments of this year's fundraising event, and a look at how the money has been spent. Featuring performances from Kylie Minogue, Snow Patrol and Meghan Trainor.
6.05 **BBC News.**
6.20 **Midlands Today; Weather.**
6.30 **Countryfile.** Matt Baker reports on a conservation project in Shropshire to prevent the county's rivers being polluted by iron ore brought to the surface by the area's long history of mining.
7.30 **Hold the Sunset.** Phil fears he will lose Edith to Bob, and that a face from his past may make an unwelcome reappearance. Last in the series.
8.00 **MasterChef.** John Torode and Gregg Wallace present the first of two programmes in which eight of the 16 cooks to make it through the heats must prepare one of their favourite dishes.
8.30 **RAF at 100 with Ewan and Colin McGregor.** The actor and his former pilot brother present a celebration of the RAF's centenary, meeting personnel and flying in iconic planes from throughout the history of the air force.
10.00 **BBC News.**
10.20 **Midlands Today; Weather.**
10.30 **FILM: War of the Worlds (2005).** A divorced father tries to protect his two children as alien war machines start to wipe out the human race. Steven Spielberg's sci-fi thriller, with Tom Cruise and Dakota Fanning.
12.15 **The Women's Football Show.** A look at the biggest issues in the women's game, focusing on matters at both club and international level.
12.50 **Weather for the Week Ahead.**
12.55 **BBC News.**

BBC2

- 6.20 **Coast.** Exploring the stories and histories of Britain's beaches. (R)
7.20 **The Instant Gardener.** An exotic garden in Croydon. (R)
8.05 **Gardeners' World.** Monty Don starts dahlias and sows annual climbing plants. (R)
8.35 **Countryfile.** Ellie Harrison assesses the effects of recent storms in Pembrokeshire. (R)
9.35 **Saturday Kitchen Best Bites.** Matt Tebbutt presents highlights of the series.
11.05 **Spring Kitchen with Tom Kerridge.** With guests Ben Caplan and Glynn Purnell. (R)
11.50 **Lorraine Pascale: How to Be a Better Cook.** The food writer helps a man who lacks the patience to prepare his own meals. (R)
12.20 **Homes Under the Hammer.** From Norfolk, London and Cumbria. (R)
1.20 **FILM: Bringing Up Baby (1938).** Screwball comedy, starring Katharine Hepburn and Cary Grant.
3.00 **Pilgrimage: The Road to Santiago.** The seven celebrities make their way to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. (R)
4.00 **The Ladykillers: Pest Detectives.** Imogen has to employ extreme measures to deal with an infestation of bedbugs. (R)
5.00 **FILM: Real Steel (2011).** Sci-fi drama, starring Hugh Jackman.
7.00 **Down the Mighty River with Steve Backshall.** The naturalist travels down the Balmi River in New Guinea from its source to the sea. He begins his journey inland at Lake Habbema, and braves white water rapids. (R)
8.00 **Top Gear.** Matt LeBlanc test drives the Ferrari 812 Superfast, while Rory Reid travels to the US in search of a muscle car that is illegal in Europe. With guest Vicky McClure (Line of Duty).
9.00 **Reggie Yates: Searching for Grenfell's Lost Lives.** The presenter meets families and friends of people who died in the Grenfell fire, to gain an understanding of the disaster's victims as people and as members of a community.
10.00 **Mock the Week.** James Acaster, Angela Barnes, Kerry Godliman, Nish Kumar and Glenn Moore join host Dara O Briain and regular Hugh Dennis for the topical comedy show. (R)
10.30 **Top Gear: Extra Gear.** Chris Harris takes the new Porsche GT3 for a spin on the track, while motoring journalist Alex Kersten and racing engineer Mark Wynne chat about the future of the V12 engine.
10.55 **FILM: Life of Crime (2013).** Two criminals kidnap the wife of a corrupt real-estate tycoon, only to discover he is not willing to pay their ransom demand. Comedy, with Jennifer Aniston and Mos Def.
12.30 **Sign Zone: Question Time.** Topical debate from Leeds, West Yorkshire, chaired by David Dimbleby. (R)
1.30 **Sign Zone: Holby City.** Ric Griffin finally stands trial, accused of manslaughter, Ollie accepts the ultimate challenge from Roxanna, and Jac is backed into a corner emotionally. (R)
2.30 **This is BBC2.** Preview of upcoming programmes from BBC2.

ITV

- 6.00 **CITV: Sooty 6.10 Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids 6.20 Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids 6.35 Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures 6.50 Super 4 7.00 Signed Stories: Share a Story 7.05 Marvel's Avengers: Ultron Revolution**
7.30 **Scrambled! Scrambled!** Two hours of children's fun.
7.35 **Scrambled! The Tom and Jerry Show.** Cat and mouse adventures. (R)
7.50 **Scrambled! Teen Titans Go!** The teenage superheroes fight to save the world. (R)
8.10 **Scrambled! Mr Bean: The Animated Series.** Bean falls foul of an aristocratic lady. (R)
8.30 **Scrambled! Spy School.** The cadets must find out who is funding GoldFist's evil schemes.
9.05 **Scrambled! Wishfart.** (R)
9.25 **ITV News.**
9.30 **Britain's Best Walks with Julia Bradbury.** A river walk in Devon. (R)
10.00 **Peston on Sunday.** Political magazine.
11.00 **The Voice UK.** The second of the knockout shows. (R)
12.50 **ITV News and Weather; Weather.**
1.00 **Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway.** Alan Carr joins the fun as this week's guest announcer. (R)
2.30 **You've Been Framed!** Clips feature a man falling off a bridge into a canal. (R)
3.00 **Tenable.** Warwick Davis tests a team from Cheshire. (R)
4.00 **Tipping Point.** Game show, hosted by Ben Shephard. (R)
5.00 **The Chase: Celebrity Special.** With Mikey North, Una Healy, Carl Froch and Alison Hammond. (R)
6.00 **Paul O'Grady: For the Love of Dogs.** A puppy is rushed to the clinic when an injury comes to light just days after arriving at Battersea, while Paul pampers a Yorkshire terrier that has been given up by its owner. (R)
6.30 **ITV News and Weather.**
6.45 **ITV News Central; Weather.**
7.00 **Celebrity Catchphrase.** Stephen Mulhern hosts a charity edition of the game show in which Jonathan Ross, Tess Daly and Linda Robson must guess the familiar phrases hidden in animated clues.
8.00 **The Durrells.** Louisa and Larry receive news that Aunt Hermione has died. Leslie decides that he wants to be with Dionisia – but it turns out that Daphne is pregnant with his child.
9.00 **The Good Karma Hospital.** Lydia tries to regain the trust of a former patient who has turned to a herbal doctor. Gabriel reveals something about his past.
10.00 **ITV News and Weather; Weather.**
10.20 **Peston on Sunday.** Political magazine, presented by Robert Peston, with Allegra Stratton. (R)
11.20 **FILM: Captain Corelli's Mandolin (2001).** Second World War romantic drama, starring Nicolas Cage and Penelope Cruz.
1.25 **Jackpot247.** Interactive gaming.
3.00 **Marcella.** (R)
3.50 **ITV Newscreen.** Text-based information service.
5.05 **The Jeremy Kyle Show.** Guests air their differences. (R)

Channel 4

- 6.10 **The King of Queens.** Doug and Carrie make new friends. (R)
6.35 **Everybody Loves Raymond.** Debra makes Ray jealous. (R)
7.00 **Everybody Loves Raymond.** Ray prepares to tell Ally the facts of life. (R)
7.25 **Frasier.** The Crane brothers set up practice together. (R)
7.55 **Frasier.** The Cranes mourn the death of a relative. (R)
8.25 **Race of Champions 2018.** Action from the motor sport event.
9.30 **Sunday Brunch.** With guests Will Young and Tracy-Ann Oberman.
12.30 **Jamie and Jimmy's Friday Night Feast.** With guest Warwick Davis. (R)
1.30 **The Simpsons.** The family relocates to a farm. (R)
2.00 **The Simpsons.** Bart is placed on medication. (R)
2.30 **Formula 1 Australian Grand Prix Highlights.** Action from the opening round of the season.
5.15 **The Great Celebrity Bake Off for Stand Up to Cancer.** Tim Minchin, Ruth Davidson, Jamie Laing and Ella Eyre compete. (R)
6.30 **Channel 4 News.**
7.00 **Homes by the Med.** Charlie Luxton explores Croatia's Dalmatian coast and islands, and visits a gleaming white property that cascades down the side of a cliff on the island of Brac. Previously shown on More4.
8.00 **Escape to the Chateau.** Dick celebrates his birthday with a hot air balloon ride over the chateau at sunrise, while Angel starts work on a new plan – building a geodesic dome on top of a floating platform.
9.00 **Homeland.** Saul calls an old friend, while Wellington has a problem.
10.15 **8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown.** Jimmy Carr returns with the comedy version of the words-and-numbers quiz, with Jon Richardson and James Acaster teaming up against Lee Mack and Sarah Millican. (R)
11.10 **FILM: Rush (2013).** Formula One racers James Hunt and Niki Lauda develop a fierce rivalry over the course of the 1976 championship. Fact-based drama, with Chris Hemsworth and Daniel Bruhl.
1.25 **The Last Leg.** Adam Hills, Josh Widdicombe and Alex Brooker are joined by celebrity guests for a comic review of the significant moments of the past seven days. Last in the series. (R)
2.20 **The Question Jury.** Tension mounts and loyalties are put to the test as two of the jurors go head to head in a battle to win the money. (R)
3.15 **KOTV Boxing Weekly.** Action from bouts around the world, including Lawrence Okolie v Isaac Chamberlain at London's O2 Arena, and a look back at Mike Tyson taking on Trevor Berbick in an 80's classic.
3.45 **Mobil 1: The Grid.** Including a preview of the Formula One season opener in Australia. (R)
4.10 **Mobil 1: The Grid.** Daniel Ricciardo and Max Verstappen assess the "halo" safety device. (R)
4.40 **Coast vs Country.** Sara Damergi and Kerr Drummond help Tony and Michelle, who have lived in Oxfordshire for 10 years and are keen to sample a more relaxed pace of life in Dorset. (R)
5.35 **Streetsmart.** Scarlett Moffatt helps a dad-of-two from Birmingham find a date. (R)

Channel 5

- 6.00 **Milkshake!:** Little Princess 6.10 Wissper 6.30 Milkshake! Monkey 6.35 The Secret Life of Puppies 6.40 Mofy 6.45 Simon 6.50 Simon 6.55 Peppa Pig 7.05 Paw Patrol 7.20 Thomas & Friends 7.30 Fireman Sam 7.40 Olly the Little White Van 7.50 Blaze and the Monster Machines 8.15 Paw Patrol 8.30 Nella the Princess Knight 8.45 Noddy: Toyland Detective 8.55 Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom 9.10 Shimmer and Shine 9.25 Digby Dragon 9.35 Peppa Pig 9.45 Peppa Pig
9.50 **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.** Part two of two. Raph tries to persuade Mona Lisa and Bishop to work together. (R)
10.25 **Football on 5: Goal Rush.** All the goals from the weekend's games in Leagues One and Two. (R)
10.50 **Cats Make You Laugh Out Loud 4.** Compilation of internet videos featuring cats. (R)
11.20 **Police Interceptors: Dog Squad Special.** Police dog teams in the Cleveland and Durham specialist operations unit. (R)
12.20 **FILM: The Illusionist (2006).** Mystery thriller, starring Edward Norton.
2.25 **FILM: The Man in the Iron Mask (1998).** Swashbuckling adventure, starring Leonardo DiCaprio.
4.45 **FILM: A Knight's Tale (2001).** Medieval comedy adventure, starring Heath Ledger.
5.45 **5 News Update.**
5.50 **FILM: A Knight's Tale (2001).** Concluded.
7.15 **Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away.** The agents try to recover more than £12,000 owed by a jeweller to one of his suppliers, and chase up more than £5,000 owed by a tenant to her former landlord for rent arrears. (R)
8.00 **Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away.** Agents chase more than £1,700 in unpaid parking fines in south-east London, and in north Wales, officers try to recover £2,000 owed by a tradesman to a former employer. (R)
8.55 **5 News Weekend.**
9.00 **FILM: The Bodyguard (1992).** A former secret service agent acts as a bodyguard for a famous singer who is being persecuted by an obsessed fan. Romantic thriller, starring Kevin Costner and Whitney Houston.
10.00 **5 News Update.**
10.05 **FILM: The Bodyguard (1992).** Concluded.
11.35 **FILM: Whitney Houston: A Tragic Love (2015).** Biopic of Whitney Houston, examining her troubled marriage to singer Bobby Brown and the pressure of fame on their relationship. Starring Yaya DaCosta and Arlen Escapeta.
1.20 **Whitney Houston: Her Greatest Hits.** A celebration of the performer's most popular songs. (R)
2.10 **SuperCasino.** Viewers get the chance to take part in live interactive gaming, with a mix of roulette-wheel spins and lively chat from the presenting team. **Britain's Greatest Bridges.** London's Tower Bridge. (R)
4.00 **House Doctor.** A Brighton flat. (R)
4.45 **Great Artists.** Profile of Leonardo da Vinci. (R)
5.10 **Wildlife SOS.** A pigeon in need of assistance. (R)
5.35

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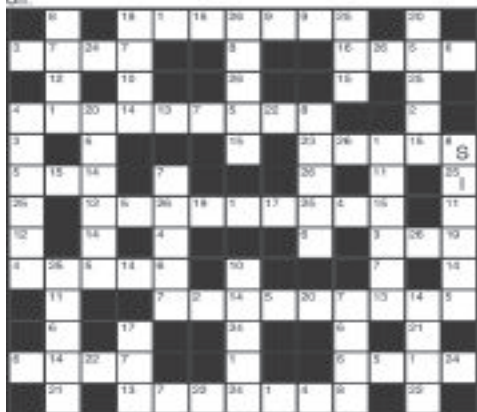
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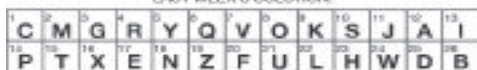
No.464

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:



Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

Cryptic Clues:

Across

1. Creatures put in a trap, escaped (4)
8. Official note in which half the comments can't be matched (10)
9. Is apprehensive about the plumage (8)
10. A number of letters for a job (4)
12. The light touch of an assassin (8)
14. Trim the Christmas tree (6)
15. The medicine-man hides the pictures (6)
17. Valuing soap made inside (6)
18. Insect with reversed barb (4)
19. It's cheap to supply a literary pot-pouri (8)
21. Set and convert into a cotton field (10)
22. After this the board will make a piece of furniture (4)

Down

2. Footman needs a trip for a change (10)
3. A little science to upset the Caledonian (4)
4. Current measure makes mother return to father in Paris (8)
5. Malcontents producing sure confusion in the Civil Service (8)
6. To cause depression I'd upset the alcohol (8)
7. The others don't work (4)
11. It will take only a minute to go all round this kind of shop (8-4)
13. Never too disturbed to produce a harmonic (8)
16. Seem to be an equal, we hear (8)
17. Rough woodwork for the yokel (8)
18. Substitutes stop in front of these (4)
20. Places providing refreshment in opposite directions (4)



Quick Clues:

Across

1. Pitch (4)
8. Volcanic tremor (10)
9. Sham (8)
10. Yawn (4)
12. Set fire to (8)
14. Golf club (8)
15. Cherish (8)
17. Beer-maker (8)
18. Russian ruler (4)
19. Contemplate (8)
21. Frustrate (10)
22. So be it (4)

Down

2. Scandalous (10)
3. Despatched (4)
4. Fruit (8)
5. Protect (8)
6. Bog (8)
7. Measure (4)
11. Priority (10)
13. Gap (8)
16. Formula (8)
17. Brigand (8)
18. Noat (4)
20. Jot (4)

Sudoku



Fill in the grid above so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

3	1	2	7	8	1	4	5	9
8	4	6	9	3	5	1	7	2
7	9	5	2	4	1	3	6	8
6	3	1	6	7	8	9	2	5
5	8	8	5	2	7	1	4	3
5	2	3	1	9	8	6	7	4
1	6	4	6	2	7	8	9	3
9	7	8	5	3	2	4	1	7

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS:
CRYPTIC - Across: 7 Onions; 8 Outcast; 9 Bleg; 10 An end; 12 Essentia; 15 At half-mast; 18 Keels; 19 Telling; 21 Fortune; 22 Sense.
Down: 1 Double talk; 2 Ramit; 3 Gang; 4 Morose; 5 Atlantic; 6 Casseroles; 11 Distressed; 13 Sells out; 14 Theobis; 16 Mafiosi; 17 Heart; 20 Lose; QUICK - Across: 7 Surge; 8 Observer; 9 Exploit; 10 Alter; 12 Disrespect; 13 Omnipotent; 18 Silt; 19 Favour; 21 Cleaver; 22 Round.
Down: 1 Obsequious; 2 Erupt; 3 Zeta; 4 Porter; 5 Assassin; 6 Written; 11 Retrograde; 13 Insolent; 14 Infidel; 16 Inform; 17 Vogue; 20 Ram.

Quiz

1. What is the name of the sequel to Milton's Paradise Lost?
2. Which avant-garde New York rock group featured Lou Reed and John Cale?
3. Whose vice-president was Richard Nixon?
4. Of which group of islands is Espiritu Santo the largest?
5. What position would we call that of the Taiswesch?
6. Which British tennis player won the 1994 Korean Open?
7. By what name do we know the spider Latrodectus mactans?
8. Who is the current UK Post Laureate?
9. Which former Bishop of London has become a Roman Catholic priest?
10. In which African country is Abuja?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Old Vic; 2 Karl Marx; 3 John Dos Passos; 4 Dorchester; 5 JRR Tolkien; 6 Nereids or nereides; 7 Honey-bee poison; 8 Pontius Pilate; 9 Textured vegetable protein; 10 1975.
Niner: FILAMENTS

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

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gives a fuel,
gives a type of fuel,
gives a power.



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FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Deaths

ADAMS

Ada

Passed away peacefully at
The Royal Shrewsbury Hospi-
tal on March 9, 2018, aged 92
years. Will be sadly missed by
all her Family and Friends.

Requiem Mass at Our Lady
and St Oswald's Roman
Catholic Church, Oswestry, on
Wednesday, March 28, at
2pm, followed by Interment
at Oswestry Cemetery.

Family flowers only. Dona-
tions if desired to The
Midlands Air Ambulance
and the Severn Hospice,
Shrewsbury.

All inquiries to
DAVID DAVIES & SONS
1 Upper Church Street
Oswestry
Telephone 01691 653116.

JONES

Brenda

Of Whittington. Passed away
peacefully on March 10, 2018,
aged 79 years. A much loved
Mum of Mark, Debra and
Sandra.

Funeral Service to be held at
Pentrebychan Crematorium,
Wrexham, on Tuesday, April
3, at 2.30pm.

Family flowers only. Dona-
tions if desired to The Mid-
lands Air Ambulance, The
PDSA and IFAW.

All inquiries to
DAVID DAVIES & SONS
1 Upper Church Street
Oswestry
Telephone 01691 653116.

SWAINCOT

William (Bill)

Passed away peacefully on
March 4, 2018. Much loved
Husband of the late Glenys.

Funeral Service at St Mary's
Parish Church, Selattyn, on
Tuesday, March 27, at 2pm,
followed by Cremation at
Pentrebychan Crematorium,
Wrexham.

Family flowers only. Dona-
tions if desired to St Mary's
Parish Church, Selattyn and
Old Vicarage Nursing Home,
Gobowen.

All inquiries to
DAVID DAVIES & SONS
1 Upper Church Street
Oswestry
Telephone 01691 653116.

LEWIS

David Charles

Of Morda. Passed away peace-
fully at The Royal Stoke
University Hospital on Feb-
ruary 23, 2018. Aged 59 years.
Loving Husband of Elaine.
Much loved Dad of Jason and
Racheal and a much loved
Grandad of Jordon, McKenzie,
Diesha, Braydon and a dear
Brother of Ann, Jean, John
and Raymond.

Funeral Service at St.
Oswald's Parish Church,
Oswestry on Friday, March
23 at 10.30am. Followed
by Interment in Oswestry
Cemetery.

Family flowers only please
but donations if desired to
The Royal Stoke University
Hospital ICU Department.

Inquiries to
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Funeral Directors

Oakwood,

Salop Road,

Oswestry.

Telephone: 01691 652995.



YOUNG

Joseph Alfred

It is with regret that we
announce the sad news of the
passing of Joseph Alfred
Young on March 7, 2018,
aged 96 years.

Formerly of Oswestry.

Service at Shrewsbury
Crematorium on Monday,
April 9, 2018 at 2pm.

No flowers by request.

Donations if wished to
The Alzheimer's Society for
which purpose a collection
box will be made available at
the Crematorium.

Inquiries please to

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Industrial Estate, Welshpool SY21 7DF.

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Skoda scoops another two awards

By Anthony Martyn

Škoda continues to go from strength to strength in the fleet arena with a duo of awards added to the trophy cabinet.

The Škoda Superb retained its title of Best Upper Medium Car for the third year running whilst new-comer, the Karoq, entered the fleet sector in style picking up the title of Best Mid-size SUV.

The Fleet News Awards, now in its 30th year – seen as the ‘Oscars’ of the fleet awards’ calendar – recognises class-leading businesses, cars and individuals within the sector.

Categories

Škoda continued its winning ways on the 2018 awards night, after the Škoda Superb was named ‘Best Upper Medium Car’ by the industry experts for the third year running.

In one of the most competitive categories, the Superb stood out for its excellent value-for-money, technology, comfort and desirability.

The all-new Škoda Karoq won its first UK award, scooping the highly-desired accolade ‘Best Mid-size SUV’. From small businesses to corporate fleets, the Karoq offers a host of technology and driver assistance systems at their fingertips.

The latest addition to the model line-up sets the standard for driver connectivity with features that include Amundsen satellite navigation with an eight-inch touchscreen display with European mapping, voice control and integrated Wi-Fi.

Henry Williams, Head of Fleet for Škoda



The Karoq entered the fleet sector in style picking up Best Mid-size SUV

UK, commented: “The Superb is a beautifully designed vehicle that offers luxury driving for fleets at excellent value that can’t be beaten and we are delighted that it has picked up this award for the second year running.

“These awards showcase the strength of our current model line-up and the competitive package that we offer business customers.”

The Škoda Superb Estate SE Tech 2.0 TDI 150PS offers whole-life cost advantages and



Škoda’s Superb was named Best Upper Medium Car for the third year running

competitive servicing costs and is available with a BIK rate of 24 per cent and P11D of £25,230.

The all-new Škoda Karoq has been launched with an SE Tech trim exclusively

designed for fleets to offer greater value for money; the SE Tech 1.5 TSI 150PS DSG has a P11D of £23,310 and a BIK rate of 24 per cent.

For more information about Škoda fleet, visit: www.skoda.co.uk/fleet

Recognition of Seat Ibiza at the Car Of The Year Awards



The multi award-winning Seat Ibiza

The Seat Ibiza has continued to gain plaudits in 2018 after being named one of the top two cars in the prestigious Car of the Year 2018 awards.

A panel of 60 members representing 23 European countries, awarded the Ibiza a silver medal, with the supermini’s combination of distinctive styling and outstanding driving dynamics earning yet another industry accolade.

The prestigious European Car of the Year award, now in its 55th year, celebrates the most outstanding new cars over the last year.

Having already added awards to its ever-growing trophy cabinet, including Best Supermini at the UK Car of the Year 2018 Awards and Best Small Car at the What Car? Car of the Year Awards this year, a rare but hard-fought silver medal at the European Car of the Year 2018 awards has further cemented the Ibiza’s place at the top of its category.

With just one prestigious award up for grabs – no categories, sub-divisions or class winners – it remains one of the most fiercely contested awards in the industry, making the Ibiza’s achievement

all the more impressive. Richard Harrison, managing director of Seat UK, commented: “From early on in its development we’ve known the Ibiza had all the ingredients to be a winning car; distinctive Spanish design, excellent driving dynamics and practicality that defies its segment.

“The Ibiza has exceeded even our lofty expectations, winning the hearts and minds of motorists across Europe.

“As this latest accolade proves, the Ibiza isn’t just a segment-leader, but is an outstanding option compared to any car on sale.”



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Nissan's family-friendly X-Trail SUV

By Graham Breeze

The Nissan X-Trail was the world's biggest selling SUV in 2017 but the test car that arrived on my drive was a million miles away from the previous model I had driven.

Dynamic new styling and a complete technology makeover mean the X-Trail is no longer the beefy workhorse I had expected to see, but instead a bigger version of the all-conquering Qashqai.

The X-Trail is now a large five-seat family SUV, with an option to upgrade to seven, and competes head-to-head with Skoda Kodiaq and Kia Sorento for UK sales.

I never regarded the X-Trail as a real player in the off-road sector so it's no surprise that the suits at Nissan have gone down the road of attracting the more family-friendly motorist with this reincarnation. It's a fiercely competitive sector but you just get the feeling there's room for this addition.

There's a choice of 1.6 and 2.0 litre dCi diesel engines and a single 1.6 litre DIG-T petrol version. The diesel offers two or four-wheel options while it's just two-wheel drive for petrol.

We tested the dCi 130 4WD, which is likely to attract a lot of UK buyers.

With a top speed of 116mph and 0-62mph in 11 seconds the test car topped 50mpg on the combined cycle, gave out 143g/km of CO2 emissions and dropped into insurance group 18.

Comfort levels have taken a big leaf from Qashqai handbook. There's electrically adjustable driver and front passenger seats, heated black leather seats to front and



The X-Trail is no longer a beefy workhorse

rear, metallic grain insets, a power opening panoramic roof with one-touch shade and a tilt and telescoping adjusting steering wheel.

Rear seats split 60/40 with nine combinations, and other standard items include, antidazzle driver mirror, automatic headlights, cruise control and speed limiter, air con, front and rear armrests, all-round electric windows, parking sensors, hands free power tailgate, high beam assist, park assist and rain-sensing wipers.

Outwardly the X-Trail is clearly influenced by Qashqai – it just looks bigger. The 19 inch alloys are impressive, as is the black honeycomb front grille and there are chrome door handles and window surrounds. X-Trail also gets rear privacy glass, LED daytime running lights, satin roof rails and a shark fin antenna.

Higher levels of technology are immediately evident with Bluetooth, CD/Radio and an outstanding speaker system, DAB radio, an all-round monitor camera, 7inch touchscreen navigation and entertainment control system,



Nissan has demonstrated that there is a bigger market from those seeking comfort and technology than from those heading for the mud

AUX socket and USB port – a big step-up for this model.

Safety and security plays a big part for Nissan and the X-Trail now gets adaptive front lighting, blind spot warning, chassis control, engine immobiliser, electronic parking brake, ESP, ABS, EBD and brake assist, stand still assist, intelligent forward emergency braking with pedestrian recognition, lane departure warning, ISOFIX child seat anchorage, rear

cross traffic alert, child locks, six airbags, a spare wheel, alarm system, rear headrests, traffic signal recognition and tyre pressure monitoring.

And is all that isn't enough to tempt you Nissan has a Platinum Edition SV available on all N-Connecta models, introducing more style, dynamism and technology.

The Platinum Edition includes side styling plate, rear styling plate, chrome mirror caps,

chrome trunk lower finisher and front over rider and a front styling plate, sport pedals with foot rest and stylish metallic black alloy wheels.

The X-Trail Tenka dCi 130 4WD on test would set you back £35,455 which includes £750 for the striking orange pearlescent paint job.

Nissan has demonstrated with this re-launch that there is a bigger market from those seeking comfort and technology than there is from those heading for the mud.

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Toyota and Lexus dominate best-depreciation hybrids

Buyers looking for a good value-for-money hybrid should opt for a Toyota C-HR, according to automotive data experts Cap HPI.

The funky-styled crossover, which was introduced late in 2016, topped a list of 10 depreciation-busting electrified vehicles, which looked at the price for new compared with the value after one year and 10,000 miles.

According to Cap HPI, the C-HR retains 84.5 per cent in this time, losing about £4,000 from its average new price of £26,301.

Sister

The list is dominated by Japanese sister companies Toyota and Lexus, which take six of the 10 spots.

Behind the C-HR in second place is the Lexus NX SUV, which retains 79.5 per cent of its average new price of £38,976, while close behind in third is the Toyota Prius+, which holds 78.6 per cent of its £29,688 price.

Cars from the Japanese manufacturers were also in fifth (Toyota Rava4, 77.4 per cent), seventh (Toyota Prius, 76.6 per cent), and ninth (Lexus IS, 74.4 per cent).

Other vehicles were the Suzuki Ignis in fourth for retaining 78.3 per cent of its £13,444 price, and the Kia Niro in sixth and eighth for holding between 77.2 and 74.8 per cent of its value, depending on the model.

The Hyundai Ioniq propped up the list, retaining 74.1 per cent of its £21,740 purchase price.

Chris Plumb, editor at Cap HPI, said: "While hybrids have grown



Toyota's C-HR is good value for money

in volume in recent years, they still remain relatively scarce in the used market compared to the traditional fuel types.

"As plug-in hybrid vehicles have not been widely adopted by fleets in any volumes, supply reaching the markets is patchy and demand exceeds supply.

"Buyers should avoid high-mileage and poor-condition examples as they are a turn-off to second-hand buyers. Finally, always make sure you pick a vehicle with a full service history."

A spokesman for Toyota and Lexus said: "Toyota and Lexus electrified vehicles have helped us buck the trend in the car market in 2017 by delivering great sales results.

"Hybrid gives customers quiet, smooth, efficient motoring and the strong residual values of Toyota and Lexus hybrid cars add a further benefit for owners in that they see greater value and equity in their vehicles when they come to change them than in most competitor products."

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Charlton	36	14	10	12	44	46	52			
Bristol Rovers	37	15	5	17	53	56	50			
Bradford	35	15	11	11	48	52	49			
Gillingham	37	12	11	14	48	52	49			
Southend	37	12	11	14	43	55	47			
Blackpool	37	11	13	14	44	48	46			
Oxford	36	12	9	15	52	54	45			
Fleetwood	36	10	9	17	46	57	40			
Doncaster	36	10	13	13	43	44	43			
AFC Wimbledon	37	11	9	17	47	42	42			
Oldham	36	10	16	10	50	62	40			
Reading	36	9	17	16	45	57	39			
Northampton	37	10	9	18	58	60	39			
MK Dons	37	9	17	17	57	51	38			
Rochdale	34	7	13	14	34	42	34			
Bury	37	9	21	31	55	30	30			

Vanarama National										
	P	W	D	L	F	A	P			
Macclesfield	37	21	9	7	57	40	69			
Sutton	39	20	9	9	57	40	69			
Boreham	38	17	4	7	53	35	65			
Tranmere	38	18	10	6	62	39	64			
Wrexham	38	16	6	6	45	30	64			
Aldershot	38	17	11	10	54	38	64			
Dover	38	17	12	9	52	33	63			
AFC Fylde	38	16	11	11	71	49	59			
Ebsfleet	37	14	9	4	48	42	56			
Bromley	35	10	10	18	42	55	45			
Dagenham & Red Bank	37	14	9	14	55	51	48			
Gateshead	36	11	15	10	51	39	48			
Mainehead	38	12	14	11	51	48	48			
Eastleigh	37	10	11	16	57	48	48			
FC Halifax	38	11	13	14	59	49	48			
Maesteg	37	11	12	14	44	55	45			
Leyton Orient	38	11	16	11	43	50	44			
Woking	38	12	18	17	60	44	44			
Barrow	38	14	14	10	54	47	44			
Hartlepool	37	9	12	16	42	55	39			
Southern Moors	37	9	19	18	53	36	39			
Torquay	38	7	10	21	34	62	31			
Chesley	38	8	13	19	32	61	31			
Guisley	37	5	11	21	32	69	26			

Vanarama National N										
	P	W	D	L	F	A	P			
Salford City	33	22	5	6	60	36	71			
Harrrogate	33	21	6	6	82	40	69			
Brackley	32	18	10	4	57	28	64			
York City	34	15	5	14	50	33	63			
Alfreton Town	33	18	8	5	54	26	62			
Hyth Spartans	32	17	14	6	57	31	61			
Spennymoor	28	14	6	8	54	44	48			
Southport	33	13	8	12	52	45	47			
Stockport	32	13	7	12	47	48	45			
Darlington	35	12	10	13	50	49	46			
Bradford Park	33	12	9	12	53	43	45			
Chorley	31	11	12	14	38	28	45			
Nuneaton	34	11	10	13	47	31	44			
Leamington	33	11	8	14	44	50	41			
Boston United	31	11	7	13	52	54	40			
Tarnworth	35	10	9	16	46	61	39			
Alfreton Town	33	11	8	17	56	58	39			
Ilkeston	33	11	7	14	49	53	40			
Curzon Ashton	32	9	10	13	42	51	37			
AFC Telford	31	10	4	17	40	56	34			
Guiseley	33	10	4	19	36	63	34			
North Ferriby	34	7	25	28	68	13	33			

Evo-Stik League										
	P	W	D	L	F	A	P			
Altrincham	34	21	7	6	78	34	70			
Warrington	34	20	7	7	56	35	67			
Ashton United	34	17	10	7	65	44	61			
Farsley Celtic	36	17	9	10	60	55	60			
FC Halifax	36	17	9	10	60	55	60			
Grantham Town	33	16	7	10	65	40	55			
Witton Albion	34	15	10	9	62	47	54			
Barwell	36	14	11	11	49	44	53			
Widnes	36	14	11	11	49	44	53			
Wokingham	34	14	7	13	57	49	49			
Stafford Rangers	37	13	10	14	44	50	49			
Lancaster City	36	12	9	15	58	61	45			
Leigh Centurion	34	12	9	15	58	61	45			
Stourbridge	33	12	8	13	50	44	49			
Mickleover	35	12	8	15	50	47	44			
Buxton	33	12	8	13	50	49	44			
Rushall	35	12	7	16	51	66	43			
Chorley	36	12	7	16	51	66	43			
Matlock Town	36	12	7	16	52	66	41			
Whitby Town	36	9	12	15	47	58	39			
Staffbridge	32	11	5	16	44	56	38			
Widnes	36	11	5	16	44	56	38			
Halesowen	37	10	21	40	69	32	32			
Sutton Coldfield	37	8	6	23	41	88	29			

Division One South										
	P	W	D	L	F	A	P			
Basford United	33	26	5	2	82	37	63			
Chesham	30	23	3	4	57	36	62			
Bedworth United	34	18	6	10	55	46	60			
Frickley Athletic	33	19	9	5	88	53	59			
Stamford	34	16	10	8	50	29	58			
Leek Town	33	16	11	6	58	31	56			
Chasetown	31	16	11	5	58	50	42			
Stratford	31	12	11	8	62	44	47			
Corby Town	32	14	3	15	52	51	45			
Lincoln United	32	13	4	15	62	70	43			
Cleethorpe	27	15	4	8	58	33	41			
Belper Town	33	11	7	15	39	62	40			
Loughborough D.	35	10	7	18	48	68	37			
Spalding United	31	10	5	16	33	36	43			
Doncaster	29	10	5	19	33	31	40			
Peterborough	33	9	5	19	50	66	32			
Kidsgrove	30	8	7	15	47	61	31			
Newcastle T.	33	8	7	18	39	58	31			
Grimsby	28	8	5	19	32	51	30			
Mk Dray T.	31	7	6	17	27	62	28			
Romulus	33	6	9	18	44	79	27			
Sheffield	30	5	11	14	45	65	26			

Hallmark Security Lge										
	P	W	D	L	F	A	P			
Silsden AFC	30	24	2	4	78	26	74			
Chesham	30	23	3	4	57	36	62			
Whitchurch A.	29	20	3	5	64	21	63			
Sandbach	29	17	10	2	59	44	53			
Cammell Laird	32	16	4	12	66	51	52			
Prestwich Heys	24	16	3	5	57	38	48			
CRFC Blackpool	29	13	3	17	57	48	38			
Alaisgar Town	27	13	6	8	57	49	45			
Holker Old Boys	28	12	5	11	47	63	41			
Carlisle City	29	12	4	13	52	48	40			
Widnes	30	12	4	14	52	48	40			
New Mills	26	11	4	11	51	38	37			
FC Oswestry T.	30	10	4	16	49	65	34			
Atherton L.R.	27	10	3	14	44	53	33			
Thornley Town	28	9	3	16	44	53	33			
Abey House	26	8	11	17	36	43	31			
Chaderton	28	7	14	12	52	68	28			
Eccleshill	27	7	5	15	37	72	26			
Bacup Boro	24	2	15	23	35	57	27			
St Helens Town	31	6	4	21	44	43	33			
Daisy Hill	26	4	5	17	32	68	17			
Nelson	28	3	6	19	29	63	15			

Spar Mid Wales League										
	P	W	D	L	F	A	P			
Welshpool	24	15	3	1	60	20	50			
Llanhaeadr	19	16	1	2	64	18	49			
Llanidloes	21	10	3	7	43	30	42			
Radnor Town	21	10	3	7	43	30	42			
Aberaron	20	9	6	5	55	31	33			
Carmar	20	9	6	5	55	31	33			
Bow Street	18	10	3	4	45	28	33			
Llanfair United	20	10	2	8	44	41	32			
Knights Town	19	10	1	8	42	35	31			
Benllyn	18	8	4	13	38	28	34			
Twyn Brynrydd	17	11	1	13	56	22	22			
Uddell Woods	20	7	10	3	29	20	41			
Kerry	18	5	2	11	32	56	17			
Chirk	18	5	2	11	32	56	17			
North Uddell	18	5	2	11	32	56	17			
North Uddell	18	5	2	11	32	56	17			

Olympians quartet on Shropshire indoor duty



Oswestry Olympians who represented Shropshire (from left): Tom Hotchkiss, Lucy McGlinchey, Massimo Wyatt and Luke Steel

FOUR members of Oswestry Olympians relished their chance to represent Shropshire in the West Midlands Regional Sportshall Championships held at Solihull.

Lucy McGlinchey was selected as a guest in the under-15 girls shot put after winning every winter Sportshall shot event when competing for the Olympians in this year's league fixtures.

Luke Steel made it a family double with his selection for the under-13 boys team just a few weeks after his sister Jess celebrated selection for the under-11 girls' team. Luke finished a creditable sixth in the vertical jump.

Oswestry and Shropshire team mates Massimo Wyatt and Tom Hotchkiss gained county selection for the third year running.

Tom confirmed the progress he has made this year with a fifth place in the final of the four laps against qualifying in the time trials against strong opposition from counties including Birmingham, Warwickshire and Hereford & Worcester.

He completed a successful day by adding almost 30cm to his personal best in the standing triple jump with a leap of 6.30 metres which was equal fourth, but fifth after count back.

Competing in the four laps, Massimo, who will still be able to compete in this age group next year, also shone when finishing just three 10ths of a second away from reaching the final.

Charlotte nets a hat-trick in cup mauling

CHARLOTTE Canlett led the way with a hat-trick as The New Saints Ladies eased into the final of the Tom Farmer Shropshire County Cup with a 9-0 beating of Ellesmere Rangers Ladies.

Although TNS dominated the first period in the clash at a blustery Wem Town, just one goal separated the sides until the 43rd minute - that scored by Sarah Jackson on 19 minutes.

Two more goals, however, came right on half time, with player-of-the-match Canlett opening her account before adding a second with a terrific strike.

After a goalless first 15 minutes of the second period, the floodgates opened once Jackson bagged her second - and TNS' fourth - on the hour.

Just one minute later, Canlett completed her hat-trick before Holly Turbill increased the margin followed by a strike from second half substitute Laura Morris.

Turbill then netted her second in the 68th minute, before Sophie Edwards completed the scoring when making it 9-0 six minutes later.

Meanwhile, TNS Ladies' clash with Sheffield United Ladies in the FA Womens Premier League Midlands division one was postponed due to snow.

Three and easy sees TNS close in on title

FOOTBALL by John Bridgwater

THE champagne's on ice after The New Saints moved to the brink of a seventh consecutive JD Welsh Premier crown by overcoming nearest rivals Bala Town 3-0 at Park Hall,

Although still needing a point to make mathematically sure, the victory means the Saints are effectively champions courtesy of a vastly superior goal difference of 46.

Ryan Brobbel's terrific strike broke the deadlock right on half time, and substitute Dean Ebbe bagged a brace after the interval to wrap up a third 3-0 win against the Lakesiders this season.

Now some 15 points clear with five games remaining, the league leaders will clinch the title if Bala fail to beat Connah's Quay Nomads next Friday night.

Should the Lakesiders prevail, then the Saints will hope to finish the job at home to Cefn Druids in front of the S4C cameras next Sunday.

"Seven in a row is some achievement whatever league you play in, and we have done it by playing the right way," said manager Scott Ruscoe. "Hopefully, we can lift the trophy next week and, with us also winning the league cup, it has not been a bad season."

"We've got five games left, and we'll be looking to win all five, score as many goals as we can, and keep as many clean sheets, and make sure we finish the season well."

"It was the third time we have beaten Bala 3-0 this season, and to score just before half time settled us down. We had been a bit sloppy in the first half, we tried to go too long too early, and left ourselves open."

Good run

Bala had arrived on a good run of form, but TNS were soon on the front foot with Greg Draper forcing keeper Ashley Morris into an early save after Aeron Edwards had fed the New Zealand striker.

The hosts continued to make the running, with Jamie Mullan firing wide after good work on the left, but Town managed to hold firm despite the Saints' early efforts.

With the action becoming stretched, Bala came more into the game, and had a chance when Mike Hayes broke through but his shot was saved by returning keeper Paul Harrison.

Harrison was then called on to keep out a Chris Venables free kick midway through the half, but TNS again threatened with Brobbel's effort hitting the roof of the net.

But the crucial breakthrough came right on half time courtesy of Brobbel's telling finish when he curled home from the edge of the box.

On the hour, the league leaders tightened their grip as substitute Ebbe - who had just come on from Draper - doubled the lead with his first touch when firing home after the Bala defence had failed to clear Ryan Pryce's cross from the left.

Bala went close to a reply when Venables and Hayes were denied by goalmouth blocks after Harrison had spilled the ball.

But the Saints sealed the victory - and effectively the title - three minutes from time when Ebbe slotted his second goal of the night after latching onto a through ball.

Saints' hopes of perfect 10 dashed



Dave Easthope goes up for a header in St Martins' defeat to Darlaston at snowy Park Hall

AFTER nine wins on the bounce, St Martins saw their run come to an end in the West Midlands League division one after being edged out 2-1 to promotion rivals Darlaston at snowy Park Hall.

Two first half goals were enough to put paid to the Saints who, despite pulling one back through Jamie Hands in the second period, were unable to salvage the game.

Defeat, their first since November, sees them slip to fifth spot in the table after being leapfrogged by their visitors.

After having their previous two fixtures postponed due to the weather, St Martins took time to get into the game and fell behind after just five minutes when a weak shot found its way into the net.

Despite the setback, they had their chances, with Hands curling his shot just over from the edge

of the box following some great team passing.

Shawn Melusi then headed against the bar after Hands had flicked the ball into the box, before the hosts suffered a sucker punch when going further behind following a break on 27 minutes.

Although keeper George Austin made a fine save to keep out the first effort from a one-on-one, he was beaten at the second attempt to leave the Saints with plenty to do.

Hands went close to a reply, but was denied by a fine save to keep out his curling free kick that was heading for the bottom corner.

Melusi then fired wide after weaving his way through the defence moments later as the chances kept coming.

With snow falling in the second half, St Martins finally got their reward on 58 minutes when reducing the areas through captain

Hands who poked home after an initial run into the box from Melusi.

The home side scented a leveller, and were almost back on terms only for sub Dave Hartshorn to be offside from a Howes cross.

In increasingly snowy conditions, Dan Stevens men continued to push, but could not find a way through despite their efforts as their unbeaten sequence came to an end.

A few days before, the Saints' clash with Allscott in the semi-final of the Commander Ethelston Cup was postponed due to a waterlogged pitch.

Meanwhile, the big clash at Newport Town - postponed three weeks ago - has been re-arranged for Easter Saturday (March 31), and their trip to Worcester Raiders has been rescheduled two days later for Easter Monday (April 2).

Town draw blank after clash with the leaders

AFTER sharing 12 goals in their previous meeting with Silsden at Park Hall, FC Oswestry Town's latest encounter with the high riding Yorkshireman ended 0-0.

The two games could hardly have been more contrasting, with last season's 6-6 draw against Silsden one of the most remarkable encounters seen in the Hallmark North West Counties League division one.

Although no goals this time, Town could take plenty of positives from a solid display against a side currently setting the pace at the top of the league.

"I could not be prouder of the lads," said manager Ryan Butcher, "We could have grabbed the three points, but 0-0 against top of the table is a fantastic result."

The hosts had chances to have won it, with Tse Nam Yue firing over, while Kyle Hancock hit the post at the other end.

The Oswestry side are 13th in the table, with nine league games remaining - the first at home to Al-sager Town on Tuesday night.

Meanwhile, Town's hopes of progressing in the Macron Cup ended in the last 16 with a 3-1 loss at Irlam after being downed by a second half hat-trick from Tim Kinsella.

In a tie put back two days due to a waterlogged pitch, the visitors had led at the break through Ryan Jones (33), but hopes of reaching the last eight faded in the second period.

Kinsella levelled matters on the hour, before netting twice more with good finishes on 73 and 85 minutes to complete his hat-trick and see the Manchester hosts through.

Llanfair net spot in the Cup semis

LLANFAIR United became the first side to book their ticket for the semi-finals of the Central Wales Cup with a hard-fought 2-1 victory over Knighton Town.

A goal in each half saw Llanfair through at a snowy Mount Field, with Karl Seliarts opening the scoring on 13 minutes when pouncing on a rebound from an Andrew Hughes shot.

After the break, Josh Austley doubled the lead with a cracking free kick on the hour, before Knighton gave themselves hope of salvaging the tie with an 83rd minute reply from Declan Beddoes.

It proved a tense finish for the hosts, but they held firm to seal their place in the last four of the competition.

Elsewhere, the cold snap saw Llan-drindod Wells' home tie with local rivals Builth Wells postponed due to an unfit pitch, and snow put paid to the clash between Waterloo Rovers and Cymru Alliance side Caersws.

Snow-go for Four Crosses

SNOW showers put paid to any chance of Four Crosses' Emrys Morgan semi-final clash against Forden United being completed.

The match at Newtown's Latham Park got underway, with United ahead inside 10 minutes when a speculative looping effort from Dan McWhinnie beat Dan Wood in the Crosses goal.

However, 40 minutes in, and with snow teaming down, referee Roger Parker called the players together.

It was a bad day for Llanfair Reserves who crashed 9-0 at title chasing Bishop's Castle in Montgomeryshire League division one.

Dan the man gives Llan a win bonus

By Dave Cooper

as Llan stayed firmly on course for the title.

Leaders WELSHPOOL saw their title hopes fade after suffering a 5-4 loss at Tywyn Brynrcrug where they found themselves three goals down after half an hour.

In testing conditions, Pool hit back with goals from Will Thomas, Rob Pritchard, Ricky Litchfield and Adam Davies, but their fightback just fell short.

Llanidloes Town stayed on course for a top three finish after a fine strike from Ashley Owen in the first half earned a 1-0 victory over Kerry at Victoria Avenue.

The lowly Lambs could take heart from a fine second half performance which saw them fail to take their chances.

Mistakes in tough conditions proved costly as Carno lost ground on the leading pack after a 3-1 home loss to Bow Street who returned with an excellent win as Tom Evans, Andrew Gittins and Ifan Burrell hit the target.

Earlier in the week, goals from Harry Watkins and Jake Mann earned Berriew a 2-0 victory over Kerry to extend their unbeaten run to five games.

The Rhiewsidars' hopes of continuing their good run were dashed on Saturday when their trip to Radnor Valley was postponed due to a waterlogged pitch.

Elsewhere, third bottom Churchstoke eased their basement concerns with a 5-0 thrashing of Borth United.

In division two, mid-table Dyffryn Banw went nap with a 5-0 hammering of struggling Talgarth Town with all the goals coming in the first half through an own goal, Jamie Huxley, Gerralt Evans, Rhodri Davies and his brother Gerralt Davies.

Hay St Mary's moved joint third with a last-gasp 3-2 victory at close rivals Aberystwyth University, Jack Biggs scoring twice and Matty Tonks getting the other. The students had twice led through George Taylor and Dylan Price.

Lowly Montgomery succumbed 3-1 to Dolgellau, Brecon Northcote won 4-3 at Newbrige, while Abermule's trip to Penybont was off due to the weather.

Guils hit on break by 10-man Seasiders

TWO second half counter-attacks sentenced Guilsfield to a 3-1 loss against 10-man Porthmadog in the swirling wind and snow at Clos Mytton.

Defeat saw the Guils lose ground on the leading pack as they slipped to fourth place in the Huws Gray Cymru Alliance, five points off second spot.

Joe Chaplin went close twice for Port in the opening minutes, before a smart move gave the home side the lead on 28 minutes as Jake Cook lobbed the ball over the back line and Adam Jenkins fired in low past keeper Richard Harvey from a tight angle.

Both sides had half chances in tough conditions, with the snow stopping the sides from playing any real football.

However, the determined visitors were back on terms eight minutes before half time when Julian Williams headed in a corner from Gareth Jones Evans.

Early in the second half, Sion Bradley struck the post before Cai Jones nodded in the rebound, but the linesman had his flag raised.

However, Porthmadog were then reduced to 10 men when Rob Evans received a second yellow. At first, referee John Jones did not show the red card, but after protests from the Guils players, he realised the mistake, and gave the Porthmadog man his marching orders.

With a one man advantage and conditions deteriorating, the villagers then laid siege to the Port goal, with one move seeing Robbie James, Jack Harris and Adam Jenkins all have shots hacked off the line.

A through ball found Bradley who coolly rounded keeper Lee Andrew and slotted into the net to give the visitors the advantage.

The Guils pushed for a leveller, but their fate was sealed four minutes from time when Bradley again ran clear to seal points for Port with his second of the game.

Powys rivals Caersws meanwhile, remain in the lower reaches of the table after suffering a wind-swept 2-1 loss at Rhyl.

Playing against the elements in the first period, the Bluebirds fell behind four minutes into the second half when a mis-hit shot from Mark Connolly fell for Phil Marsh to score from close range.

They were gifted a leveller when a sliced clearance from keeper Rory Crowther fell for Steve Blenkinsop who fired into an empty net, but were downed when Jason Jeffries rose to head in with 13 minutes remaining.

COBRA end all square in a tense affair

HONOURS were shared as COBRA fought out a 7-7 draw away to Powys rivals Llanidloes in the Welsh League division two (north) - with both sides picking up two points for their efforts.

Neither side was able to post any points in the first half, although the visitors had a couple of opportunities, but the deadlock was broken after the interval when COBRA went 7-0 up courtesy of penalty try after pressure from a scrum.

The home side then rallied, and earned their reward when second row Arwel Lloyd went over, with Adam Price converting.

The result effectively ended COBRA's promotion pursuit, with the Llanfair side nine points adrift of second placed Shotton Steel, with the two sides having now played the same number of games (13).

WELSHPOOL, who had no league action last weekend, face a testing trip to promotion hopefuls Shotton on Saturday as they bid to maintain their revival.



Ready to tale the plunge – Dan Jones during the Red Bull Neptune Steps in Glasgow, an event he went on to win



Otters' ace Jones is open water winner

SWIMMING by John Bridgwater

OSWESTRY Otters swimmer Dan Jones underlined his credentials by storming to victory after taking to the open water to tackle a new endurance challenge in Scotland.

Following the bitter disappointment of narrowly missing out on selection for the Commonwealth Games, the 21-year-old decided to try something completely different by entering the Red Bull Neptune Steps event in Glasgow.

Having never tackled open water before, the Welshpool lad rose to the challenge in the icy conditions of the Forth and Clyde canal, using his fitness, strength and considerable swimming skills to clinch a terrific win.

Being more accustomed to training in a pool with a water temperature of 26 degrees, Dan beat off 600 swimmers in gruelling conditions to take the honours in seven minutes 19 seconds, with Andrew Horsfall-Turner coming second.

In icy cold water, the event sees a 420 metre-swim, while competitors also have to haul themselves over seven lock gates using ladders and ropes, while ducking waterfalls.

Dan, the Otters club captain, continues to train full time with Swansea Aquatics and Swim Wales, and recently returned from a training camp and competition in Florida and Texas with the Welsh squad.

He travelled to the British Championships in Edinburgh at the start of March where he was very happy to qualify for the A final and achieve fifth in GB for 100 freestyle and ninth for 50 freestyle.

Later this month, he will compete at the Welsh Nationals before heading to the British Summer Nationals in July, while he is working on attaining squad times and funding times for next season.

His brother Morgan, 17, trains regularly with Oswestry Otters, and was selected for Welsh Youth squad last September.

He has regular Welsh squad training days in Swansea and made his international debut in Nice, France in February with the squad.

The teenager also competed in Edinburgh at the British Championships where he had four good swims, a, personal best and valuable experience as it was his first time at this event.

He also has Welsh Nationals at Easter In Swansea and British Summer Nationals in Sheffield in July to focus on.

The Jones brothers are indebted to financial help from Welshpool butcher Rikki Lloyd and also Rambo and Chris from Welshpool Best Kebab.



Dan's younger brother Morgan Jones made the Wales squad last year

Tigers win to maintain their perfect wins record

MORDA Tigers tightened their grip at the top of the Oswestry Table Tennis League division one with a 7-3 victory against the Morda A team.

With Brian Rainford in the opposition line-up, it was to prove a stern test for the Tigers who again showed their credentials to make it 15 wins in 15 league outings.

In top form and man-of-the-match was Huw Jones who only dropped one set to Rainford.

Both Jeremy Chavez and Jason Hughes played well in winning two each, but Rainford and Suckley comfortably won the doubles and put an end to Hughes and Chavez's three-year unbeaten run.

Morda Eagles continue to fly high at the top of the second division despite being held 5-5 by visiting Llansilin A in a good match which included three excellent five-set games.

Llansilin's Aaron Morris played particularly well to beat Marcin Stepkowski.

Spotlight to fall on unsung sporting heroes

THE county's unsung football heroes will step into the spotlight at the Shropshire FA Community Awards – and you can send in your nominations.

Ex-England international Steve Hodge will be the guest speaker at the Lord Hill Hotel in Shrewsbury on Friday, June 29 to help celebrate all that's great about grassroots football.

The awards have proved a huge hit since being introduced in 2010 and a host of accolades will be dished out across various categories, and we are looking for as many nominations as possible.

The night is for the people who make a difference and will see their unstinting devotion to the beautiful game rewarded. So if you

know of anyone or any team that deserves to have their name up in lights, simply fill in the nomination form on the right and send to the address at the bottom.

Shropshire FA chairman Dave Ralphs is looking forward to a night to remember.

"The night is all about the many, many volunteers," said Ralphs. "It's nice that they are able to come in front of other people and be acknowledged for what they have done. We will have 250 people who want to celebrate football in Shropshire, which is great."

Shropshire FA chief executive Roy Waterfield is delighted to see the unsung heroes deservedly recognised.

He said: "This celebration of the achievements of thousands of volunteers in sustain-

ing grassroots football is our way of shining a light on their incredible contribution to the nation's favourite team sport and thanking them for helping develop the game."

■ **The categories include:** Shropshire FA Referee of the Year; FA Charter Standard Club of the Year; FA Charter Standard Development Club of the Year; FA Charter Standard Community Club of the Year; FA Charter Standard League of the Year; Best Inclusive Project of the Year; Young Volunteer of the Year; Coach of the Year; Outstanding Contribution to Adult Football; Respect Club of the Year.

SHROPSHIRE FA COMMUNITY AWARDS 2018

NOMINEE DETAILS

NAME/CLUB:..... TEL:.....

CATEGORY:.....

EMAIL:.....

ADDRESS:.....

NOMINATOR DETAILS

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REASON FOR NOMINATION (attach additional page if necessary):.....

Send entries to Darren Beech, Football Development Team Leader, Shropshire Football Association, Montgomery Waters Meadow, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ST.



Sport

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Scotland – P39



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TNS can win title without kicking ball

ANOTHER title may almost be in the bag, but boss Scott Ruscoe insists The New Saints won't be taking their eyes off the ball in the coming weeks.

Although still needing a point to make mathematically sure of a seventh consecutive Welsh Premier crown – and 12th in all – the Saints are effectively champions courtesy of a vastly superior goal difference of 46.

Lying 15 points clear with five games remaining, they could be confirmed league winners without kicking a ball if Bala Town fail to defeat Connah's Quay Nomads on Friday night.

If the Lakesiders do prevail, then TNS will hope to finish the job at home to Cefn Druids in front of the S4C cameras on Sunday (2pm).

"We've got five games left, and we want to try and win all five and get as many points we can," said Ruscoe. "We won't be downing tools just because the title's won."

"Whether we need a point or not come Sunday, we want to put in a performance worthy of the champions."

"Seven titles in a row is some achievement whatever league you play in, and we have done it by playing the right way."

"We've stuttered a bit in the last few weeks, every team goes through a bad patch, but overall we have been very consistent and kept high standards."

"At the start of the season you're always looking to win as many trophies as possible. It was disappointing to lose in the semi-final of the IRN-BRU Cup and quarter-final of the Welsh Cup, but we've still won the league and the league cup, so it's not been a bad season."

Meanwhile midfielder Jon Routledge has targeted more trophies after signing a new contract at TNS.

Since arriving at Park Hall, the former Wigan Athletic and Dumbarton player has been a key figure in the continued success of the Saints.

"I'm happy that I've signed and look forward to keep doing well," he said. "Hopefully there will be a few more trophies next season for the lads."

Open day on way for bowling club

YE OLDE CROFTE Bowling Club is throwing open its doors for players of all abilities and ages at the end of the month.

The club, that plays in the Oswestry and District Bowling League, runs three teams, including one solely for veteran players.

As the season approaches, the club is holding an open day on Saturday, March 31 (from 2pm), where anyone interested in playing the sport can attend.

The club is situated next to EM Hughes Auto Care in Welsh Walls in Oswestry at the junction with Willow Street. For further information, contact Tom on 01691-659904.

Saints vow to hit back after rare loss

ST MARTINS suffered a rare setback after slipping to their first defeat in 10 outings in the West Midlands League division one.

Having won nine games on the trot, the Saints were edged out 2-1 to promotion rivals Darlaston Town at a snowy Park Hall. It was their first loss since November, and saw them slip one place to fifth.

"The warning signs have been there for the last few weeks, and we need to bounce back and go on another good run," said manager Dan Stevens.

FOOTBALL by John Bridgwater

"It was disappointing to lose against our promotion rivals, and it was all the more disappointing with second placed Newport losing."

"We've got no game on Saturday, but then we're away to Newport and Worcester Raiders over the Easter weekend which will shape our season."

With seven games left, the Saints are still just five points off second place, and in good shape to

secure a top five finish for promotion.

FC Oswestry Town secured a creditable 0-0 draw with high flying Silsden in the Hallmark North West Counties League division one.

"Everyone put in a good shift from the word go," said boss Ryan Butcher. "Keeping a clean sheet against the league leaders will put us in good stead going forward. We could have snuck it, we had a couple of chances, but so did they, and overall a draw was a fair result."

ELLESMERE TRIO HEAD TO GAMES

SWIMMING by John Bridgwater

ELLESMERE College Titans duo Freya Anderson and Cassie Wild will continue their remarkable rise when they fly to Australia later this week for the Commonwealth Games.

Anderson will be making her debut for Team England while team-mate Wild has been named as part of Scotland's aquatics squad for the Games which run from April 4-15.

The duo – coached at the College by Alan Bircher – have tasted success at various World and European junior competitions and now look to make waves on the senior international stage.

Just turned 17, Anderson won her debut British title in 2017 and secured herself a first senior call-up to the British Swimming team for the World Championships in Hungary.

Competing for Scotland will be Titans team-mate Wild, also 17, who claimed top spot in the junior 100m backstroke at last year's British Championships.

Reserve

Also flying out to Brisbane on Friday is Caro Hulme, the Oswestry-born hockey player after being selected as a travelling reserve for Wales.

A former Ellesmere College captain, the 18-year-old will train on the Gold Coast with the Welsh squad for at least two weeks to cover any illness or injury.

If not named in the tournament squad, she will return home following the opening ceremony and team up with her club side Beeston for the National League play-offs.

The teenager has represented Wales more than 50 times at under-16, 18 and 21 level – but is yet to be capped at senior international level.

"I was lucky enough to make the long squad for the Games just after Christmas, but I never seriously thought I would make the final selection," she said. "When I got the call, I was really surprised, but I am so excited."



Freya Anderson and Cassie Wild are on the plane to Oz as is Caro Hulme (below). Pic: David Kissman.

Caro's Games call-up follows another impressive season in club hockey in which she helped Beeston to National League glory – just 12 months after doing the same with Brooklands Poynton Manchester.

Sister Lottie won her first senior international cap for Wales at the European Indoor Championships in Brussels in January.

Meanwhile, Forden marathon man Andy Davies is representing Wales at his second Games following a terrific 2017.



"Representing my country will be an honour, but I'm equally as proud to be flying the flag for Montgomeryshire," he said.

Last year, Davies recorded a personal best time of two hours 15.11 seconds when finishing 16th at the London Marathon.

Mid Wales bowlers Hazel Wilson and Kathy Pearce will also be at the Gold Coast as respective team manager and women's coach of the Wales Bowls team that includes Berriew's Catherine Taylor.

Hamilton is back to fire up the Guils

STRIKER Asa Hamilton is back to bolster Guilsfield's push for a high finish in the Huws Gray Cymru Alliance after serving a four-match ban.

The in-form marksman was sent off against Flint Town United back on February 3, but, with a number of games postponed due to the weather, has faced an extended wait for his return.

Having now completed his suspension, he was available for the midweek Central Wales Cup quarter-final clash at home to Bow Street.

The Guils then return to league duty on Saturday with a trip to struggling Queens Park, and boss Nathan Leonard is looking for improvements after the 3-1 loss to Porthmadog – their first home defeat of the season.

That setback saw the villagers slip to fourth in the table, five points off second place, and Leonard said: "It was disappointing."

"We played well first half and controlled the game, but huge errors in the second half cost us."

"The team and individual performances were nowhere near what I expect and hopefully we get a positive reaction this week."

COBRA looking to sign off with wins

PROMOTION hopes may have faded, but COBRA will want to finish their campaign in the Welsh League division two (north) on a strong note.

Chances of making a swift return to the first division look to be over after the Meifod side were held 7-7 at Llandiloed.

They remain fourth, nine points adrift of second placed Shotton Steel, with seven games remaining, the first being a trip to struggling Abergele on Saturday before facing back-to-back matches with unbeaten league leaders Denbigh.

WELSHPOOL face a tricky trip to Shotton on Saturday, while OSWESTRY hope to play their first league game in a month in the South Lancs and Cheshire Two when they head to Port Sunlight.

Roman back for Morda Road stint

GLAMORGAN'S promising all rounder Roman Walker will again be in Oswestry's ranks this season as they step up to the challenge of playing in the Birmingham Cricket League division one.

The 17-year-old quick bowler and handy batsman, impressed last term despite being troubled with a back injury, and spent the winter with England under-19s.

After a doubt over his availability, Walker is set to figure along with overseas player Rituraj Singh, an Indian A medium quick bowler, while Worcestershire batsman Joe Clarke will play when free from First Class commitments.

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